THE

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

ISSUE 185 · JULY 99 · £2·80 / US$6·50

Michael Gira
Sing a Swansong

Otomo Yoshihide
The noise of silence

Concrète rock
From Steppenwolf to John Oswald

Nobukazu Takemura

Kirk Degiorgio on the Fender Rhodes

Tony Allen

US Maple

On record
Birthday Party, Suicide, Miles Davis, Roedelius

Festivals special
LMC, Bang On A Can, Drifting, Impakt

CARL CRAIG

TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE

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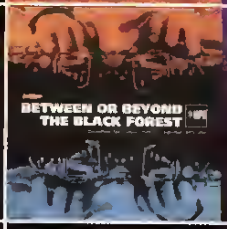
SUBTERRANEAN PRESENTS:

CAPITOL K
'SOUNDS OF THE EMPIRE'
(PLANET MU)
Absolutely stunning album, follows their recent hME Single of the Week, a unique masterpiece of infectious melodies, experimental but totally accessible, part Tortoise, part Chemical Brothers, 23 Skidoo, Boto, Mogwai....miles ahead of the post rock pack.

GRAMME
`PRE RELEASE'
(OUTPUT)
"This six tracker is as dirty and grungey as you can get and still call it dance music. The whole album takes it's cue from 80's NY new wave hocco bands like ESG and Liquid Liquid, the kind of bands Basement Jaxx mean when they talk about punk garage" 4/5 Mixmag.

TRANSIENT WAVES
'SONIC NARCOTIC'
(FAT CAT)
Like peers Labradford/Bowery Electric, Transient Waves' sound is rooted in the drifting disembodied textures of the processed guitar, as their name suggests - layers of sound overlapping in a blissed out, shimmering ambiance.

TARWATER FEAT. TIKIMAN
`LIKE A MIRACLE'
(BBUL STATIC BOBBD)
Awesome collaboration featuring Tarwater and Rhythm & Sound vocalist TIKIMAN. Crafting moody melodic electronica with the finest of reggae vocals and dub versions, a unique blending of style and grooves.Available as 12"/CD.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
`M.P.S. - BETWEEN OR BEYOND THE BLACK FOREST'
(CRIPPLED DICK HOT WAX)
Dancefloor Jazz classics from the legendary and highly collectable MPS label.Deluxe double vinyl, cd and book with cd. Features Ira Kriss (from `Jazzanova' album), Third Wave Vocal Ensemble, Monty Alexander, George Duke, Horst Jankowski, Roland Kovac, Mike Beck and many more.

MONSIEUR LEROC
`LE SLOW MOTION BOOGIE WOOGIE'
(PAYOLA)
Superfunky album from Monsieur Leroc, downtempo beats over old funk loops with hints of easy listening and electro. File next to Instrumental beastie Boys, Money Mark.

VARIOUS
'ORITEO BREAKS NATION'
(BOTCHIT & BCARPER)
Botchit & Scarper's pre - millennial summer of excesses reach their zenith with this release, showing influences coming from D&B, funk, techno, house, hardcore, hip hop.Features Frog Basty, Jannie Pilgram vs Arthur Baker, Uptown Connection,World of Crime, Motisse, T Power, OLIM. Bonus CD mixed by Botchit head honcho Vinnie.

VEDIC SOUND
'SONG OF LIGHT'
(SUN RASA)
`Mini album from Vedic, resident DJ with Talvin Singh at Anokha, has performed and played alongside Coldcut, A.D.F., Earthtribe. After first connection with Outcaste records in 94-95, he has been incorporating the Sacred Arts into his music using elements from the Angelic and Sanskritt traditions.

TARWATER
'REMIX E.P.'
(BOOM TONE)
Remix mini album (CD only), sourced from the critically acclaimed `Silur' album IKUTTY YOI. Features remixes from To Rococo Rot, Bundy K Brown, Kite, Birdwatcher and Third Eye Foundation.

SACKVILLE
`THE PRINCIPLES OF SCIENCE'
(CONSTELLATION)
"Modernist pop with damaged roots - Sackville distill a wide range of folk, rock and avant influences through dreamy finger-picked guitar and violin, pulsing piano and wondrous lyricism.

CONSOLE
'PAN OR AMA'
(PAYDLA)
Beautiful album of sparse, minimal beats/electronica, recently appeared at Daniel Millers' `Meltdown' festival alongside Faust and To Rococo Rot. Part Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada part Plastikman.

D.J. BEATTIE
'DROOL'
(SPYMANIA)
Hot on the heels of MOK's album, Spymania release the next full length from Brighton based Daniel Beattie (aka D.I.A.L., tracks as Biskeno, Lucky Kitchen). Spunky strings, flutes, deep dubby tech house, reverb piano, dark noise, jazz and ambient.

WARN DEFEVER
'I WANT YOU TO LIVE 100 YEARS'
(LO RECORDINGS)
Debut album from Warn Defever of Michigan's highly regarded his name is Alive. A low-key, mainly acoustic collection of songs interest with surreal film dialogue. Simple, strange and rather wonderful.

E.A.R
'PESTREPELLER'
(OCHRE RECORDS)
Sonic Boom has processed, restructured and reworked `Ultrasonic Attack Wave Pestreppeller (out last year as Sympathy...). Limited glitter vinyl (1000) and mirror board sleeve cd (20ds).

VARIOUS
'ON THE CAM'
(TONGO & GO)
Super cheap sampler for less than the price of a cd single!. Includestracks by established faves such as Rachels, June of 44, Blonde Redhead, Delta 72 plus the cream of the new Brooklyn black Desert Procession, Shannon Wright, Skull Control and Red Stars Theory.

SI-(CUT).DR
`RATE OF LIVING'
(SPRAWL IMPOINT)
Douglas Hedford's third album.Its a complex but melodious creature. Last album `behind You' was described in the Wire as "excellent, startling ambient acupuncture of the highest order".

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your monthly exploration of new music

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NB *The Invisible Jukebox feature is taking a summer break It will return next month, along with the Epiphanies column*

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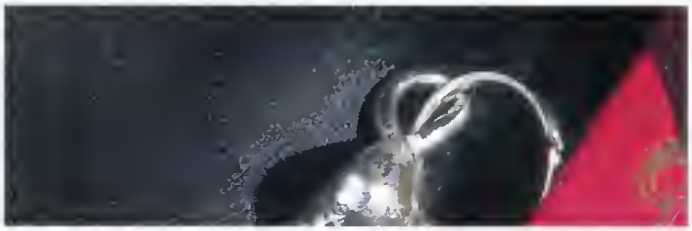

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editor's idea

Casting around for suitable subject matter for this column, I find myself drawn to music that was either recorded more than 25 years ago, or that *sounds* like it was recorded more than 25 years ago.

Don't worry, you haven't picked up the new issue of *Mojo* by mistake: the musical vintage I'm referring to has no place in the dusty vitrine of 90s rock criticism.

Personally, I blame Kirk Degiorgio. On page 28 of this month's issue, Kirk, one of the most intelligent and effective producers currently working in electronic music, essays a loving, involved tribute to what he refers to as "this most mythologised of keyboard instruments", the Fender Rhodes electric piano (and no, you haven't picked up the new of issue of *Keyboard* magazine by mistake either). As anyone with any nous should know by now, in the early 70s, the Fender Rhodes was, to paraphrase Kirk again, the tool which facilitated the revolutionary electric jazz of Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul, Chick Corea and God knows how many others along the way.

Now, regular readers of this mag will know that I can prattle on for bloody ages about the kind of music discussed in Kirk's article. But this month, this particular strand of thought is given additional impetus by the coincidental arrival in *The Wire* office of two releases, separated by a quarter of a century, that stand as compelling evidence of the Fender Rhodes's ability to transmute archaic structures into futurist temples.

Anyone languishing under the impression that the CD reissue industry has long since exhumed and digitally souped up the entire analogue archive of early 70s jazz fusion should take a listen to Catalyst's *The Funkiest Band You Never Heard*. This two CD set, issued by the New York based 32 Groove imprint, compiles four utterly obscure albums recorded between 1972-74, the twilight of the age of electric jazz, by a group including electric pianist Eddie Green and saxophonist Odean Pope, although it's the presence on the discs of guest musicians such as drummer Jabali Billy Hart, synth technician Pat Gleason and guitarist Charles Ellerbee that initially sets the antennae twitching.

No offence to anyone involved, but Catalyst's compositions, the standard fusion mix of angular hornlines strung across basic funk-rock vamps, weren't exactly Ivor Novello contenders. Fortunately, Eddie Green approaches the Fender Rhodes like Herbie Hancock himself, as "a stargate", to quote Kirk again, "which could access new galaxies of sound, texture and tone-colour". As a consequence, Catalyst tracks such as "East", "New-Found Truths" and "Celestial Bodies" are transformed from rusty earth-bound vehicles into jewel-encrusted starships to cosmic jazz heaven.

Were I a DJ, I might segue "New-Found Truths" into any one of eight tracks recorded over a quarter of a century later by a previously unknown entity calling itself Flanger and which are included on a new CD titled *Templates* — and challenge anyone within earshot to spot the time difference.

Actually, Flanger is a duo of Atom Heart and Burnt Friedman, recording for Coldcut's N'Tone label. More familiar to denizens of the global electronic network, with *Templates* they have produced the first great 70s fusion album of the year.

Assembled somewhere in the ether between Cologne and Santiago, the tracks on *Templates* function as sonic time tunnels. The kind of microscopic digital glitches that are foregrounded on Friedman's Nonplace Urban Field releases are here recombined into a bitmapped image of Airto Moreira, a percussive, insectoid presence flickering at the edges of the music. Atom Heart is no Lonnie Liston Smith (nor Eddie Green, come to that), but he knows how to modify the Fender Rhodes sound so it becomes the source for lakes of liquid steel.

'Only complex psychoacoustics can explain why the Rhodes sounds so captivating," writes Kirk Degiorgio. Eddie Green, Atom Heart and yours truly know exactly what he means. **TONY HERRINGTON**

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letters

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Stock responses

I found your last issue quite confusing with so much Stock (&) Hausen (*The Wire* 184) As a matter of fact, although I knew about Stockhausen, I thought that Stock, Hausen & Walkman were the guys who, producing very wise repetitive electronics, took Rick Astley to the top But I was not disappointed this issue will be part of the stock in my house
David Rengel *Norwich*

I'm impressed by Karlheinz Stockhausen's spiritual glow on your June cover and also by his blue rinse on page 24 It looks like he has the same shirt on in both pics, but different cardigans Or have you changed the colour of his cardigan on the cover so as to enhance the spiritual glow? I know for a fact that he has an orange cardigan because I saw him wearing it over his otherwise white costume and hairdo at a performance of *Stimmung* in Chalon Sur Saone last year He didn't seem to be glowing so much on that occasion, but perhaps he was tired after travelling
Jason Cloth *Saisy, France*

Down under diet

For someone who used to diet on jazz rock in her early twenties, devouring every bit of Weather Report, Mahavishnu Orchestra and, somewhat later, every ECM record she could get her hands on, I caught up on 'adventures in modern music' rather late (somebody's got to do the job to raise children) Late, but fast and greedy As I was always looking for the idiosyncratic, the isolated, as well as insulated, the music of New Zealand seemed a good place to start From there on I conquered the world which was also *The Wire*'s world, as I found out much later I only needed one issue to be convinced that life would never be OK without a subscription And now it all falls into place with your fine article on The Dead C (*The Wire* 184) Perhaps you might even consider doing an article on the entire New Zealand underground scene and all its underrated artists, for instance Peter Jefferies, who in my opinion deserves more than just a side mention as he engineered most (now hopelessly deleted) albums from that scene during the early period Besides that, Jefferies happens to be one of the finest musicians around and his album *The Last Great Challenge In A Dull World* (Ajax) is a monument and a must for everyone into modern music
Sybilla Poortman *An Holtum, The Netherlands*

On the road again

Kudos to Biba Kopf for the evocative autobahn feature (Undercurrents, *The Wire* 184) absolutely on the spot By the way, the poetic statement of the highway's legacy's transition from America to Germany can be found in the closing sequence of *Alice In The Cities* The main character, now back in Germany, sits in a train and is reading the news about John Ford's death Having overseen the handing-over, the camera slowly soars away, like a guardian angel The following year Kraftwerk released "Autobahn", which basically is a Beach Boys song try and sing *"Ba-ba-ba-Barbara Ann"* over *"Wir fahr'n fahr'n fahr'n auf der Autobahn"* "Ich muss unterwegs sein (Und wenn ich einmals nicht mehr kann?)," asks Peter Handke, providing Biba's feature with the perfect epigraph
Saverio Pechini *Udine, Italy*

Industrial complexes

Re Review of Thee Majesty live at London's Royal Festival Hall (On Location, *The Wire* 184) The prompt quoted by Biba Kopf should have been correctly rendered "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" It's actually a quotation from the Spanish philosopher George Santayana Curiously, another Santayana quotation ("Only the dead have seen the end of war") is written on the back sleeve of *Balaklava* by Pearls Before Swine, reputedly Mr P-Orridge's favourite album ever (see a vintage issue of *Nanavesh* fanzine) A track from this album ("Translucent Carriages") has been reinterpreted by Psychic TV on *A Pagan Day* Life ain't easy!
Nicola Catalano *San Giorgio A Cremano, Italy*

I was very pleased to read *The Wire*'s review of the autobiography of Penny Rimbaud, drummer with the anarchist group Crass (Print Run, *The Wire* 183) His book is interesting but pretty dreadful in some ways Nonetheless, this group's huge popularity and influence have been consistently swept under the historical carpet, because genuine idealism is always too hot to handle The fact is that Crass were one of the most potent forces that genuinely alternative culture has created in the last three decades of this century Even now, even on a purely artistic level, their incredible blend of punk, free jazz, noise and musique concrete influences, and stunning graphics, make much of what passes for alternative culture seem pointless by comparison I for one hope their legacy, and particularly their political legacy, will survive

At the height of their success Crass were selling more copies of their records in a single week than the best selling Throbbing Gristle titles sold in their entire commercial lifetime, yet TG are far better represented in the official history of alternative culture In his recent book on TG, Simon Ford asserts that TG did a lot more than most groups to promote interest in libertarian politics, but they did a great deal less than Crass It is also a fact that TG's 'ambiguous' imagery, whether this was their intention or not, did more than most groups to promote interest in Nazi politics I know the present cultural climate doesn't exactly put politics close to people's hearts, with everybody interested in making a fast buck, but the current wave of murderous Nazi terrorism begs the question as to how the people and companies in the alternative music scene who have published and promoted openly Nazi acts like Non and Death In June feel about themselves now?
Markus Schenker *London*

Amused to read your positive write ups of both Crass and Throbbing Gristle in your last two issues I feel however you're doing your younger readers a bit of a disservice by not explicitly pointing out that these two admittedly excellent groups of propagandists were also responsible for some of the of the most abysmal, and dare I say, crap records of all time I can see the bemused teenagers lining up outside the Record And Tape Exchange to return their disastrous purchases from here
Crawford Smith *Uster, Switzerland*

Sleeping partners

It was illuminating to read two very good features on two controversy magnets Mark E Smith (*The Wire* 183) and Genesis P-Orridge (182), and also to read the thoughts that were detonated in the minds of readers on both sides of the Atlantic

It has come to the stage for us all to realise that whether they produce work that measures up to scratch with yesteryear is neither here nor there — the fact is, and always will be, that they were original and very timeless in their halcyon days (1977-82) But they did not act alone in their surroundings I spoke to an ex-Fall member (who shall remain nameless) a few years back and when asked to sum up Smith he answered, "Well, he's a genius and he's a twat!"

As for "The grand old lady of Industrial" (his words), we only have to look at the paths taken by his former

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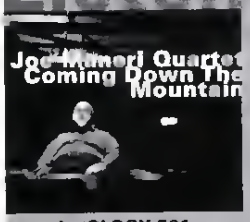

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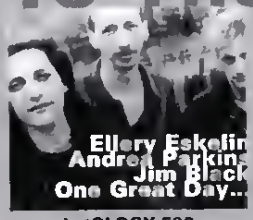

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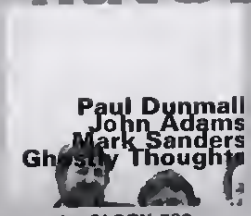

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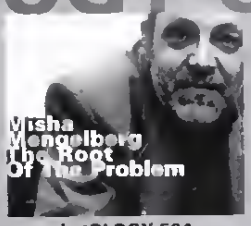

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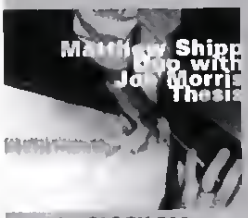
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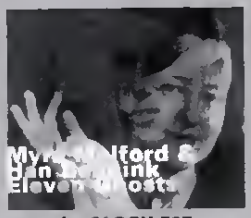
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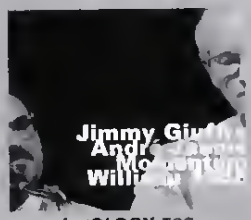
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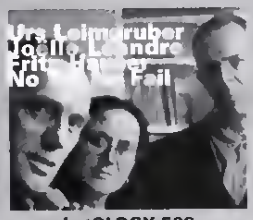
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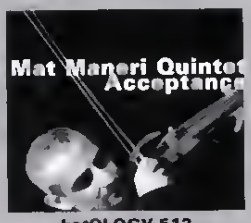

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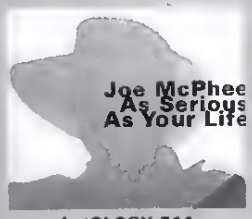

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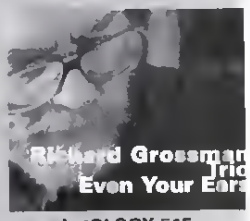
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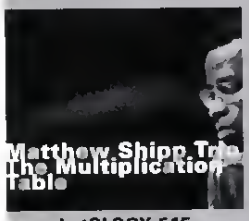
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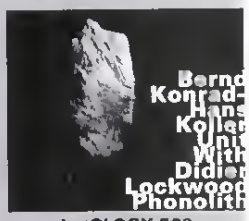
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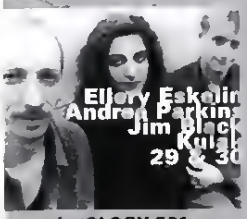
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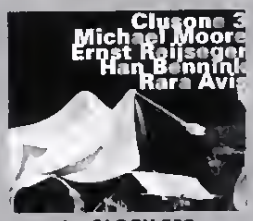
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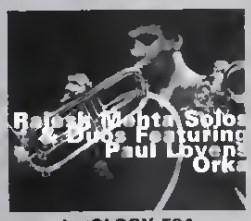
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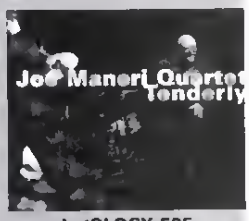
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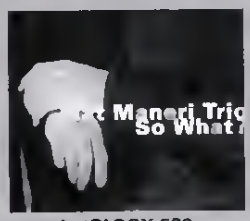

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associates to see that there was some form of 'experimental think tank' in motion By the way, wouldn't it be nice if the staff at *The Wire* were going to include Throbbing Gristle Non, Monty Cazazza *et al* in the Undercurrents feature I await with baited breath
Tim Jones *Manchester*

Bombs nailed

Re Alec Empire's Invisible Jukebox (*The Wire* 183) Thanks for a great interview There's just one fault the Swedish band Brainbombs are spelled Brain Bomb They have a new CD, *Urge To Kill*, which is recently out on Load Records, so if you're into violent music with few chords, it might be something for you And whatever you do, don't mix them up with the Austrian powerpop band The Brainbombs
Johan Karlsson *via e-mail*

Norwegian psycho

First of all, let me thank *The Wire* staff for the recent interest in Norwegian music (Nils Økland, Supersilent, Rolf Wallin Frode Gjerstad and others) But how you have managed to avoid writing about Motorpsycho, apart from a brief mention in connection with Helge Sten and Supersilent, is the only thing that baffles me Motorpsycho is perhaps the most innovative band within rock at present, and definitely deserves a closer listen at *The Wire* offices

A reviewer can't be expected to know everything, so here's a few additional bits of trivia as regards Edwin Pouncey's review of When's *Psychedelic Wunderbaum* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 182) The "horribly designed cover" is in fact lifted from a book translated as *A Guide To The Driver's Licence* The title's tongue-in-cheek factor escapes Mr Pouncey, since he is obviously not aware that a Wunderbaum is a car air freshener, shaped like a Christmas tree and smelling something terrible Being Norwegian, the 'concept of the design and title makes total sense to me It's a special kind of aesthetics lifted from Norwegian auto-environments On the other hand, I assume Mr Pouncey hasn't really listened to the CD very closely, since he states that Aleister Crowley and Tom Wolfe are "guest speakers" on the album In fact, When have used poems and words *by* said writers, but not their voices

Good to see David Keenan giving a good review to Coil's latest EP (*The Wire* 183), especially the mention of violinist Bill Breeze's contribution Breeze is an accomplished musician who has worked with Angus MacLise among others Making snide remarks that John Everall and Theresa Mills ' are lucky enough to know Coil" in his review of Tactile's *Borderlands* seems on the other hand, quite unnecessary I suspect that John Balance is equally lucky to know John Everall and Theresa Mills, and Tactile has several releases out already without the added voice of Balance

I would also like to mention as an added bit of info re the article Music Of The Spheres (Undercurrents, *The Wire* 181) that in 1979 John Rodgers and Willie Ruff released an album called *Kepler's Harmony Of The World A Realization For the Ear* They also had an article on the subject in *American Scientist* Vol 67 No 3 (1979), for those who'd like to investigate their pioneering work further I was also surprised that Paul Hindemith — whose longest opera is based on the life of Kepler wasn't mentioned in that particular context Otherwise, thanks for the best music mag ever
Arild Stromsvag *Bergen, Norway*

Clodhopping category

Prog is, as everyone should have argued himself or herself into knowing by now, a more than inconsistent musical tag I have re-read a lot of old issues lately, focusing on turntablism In On Location, *The Wire* 180, Mike Shallcross refers to "ProgHop" being "the humourless art of gratuitous DJ accomplishment" He adds 'Personally I can't see the point of cutting between two James Brown records so fast that the groove gets lost." In the 98 Rewind issue (*The Wire* 179), DJ Q-Bert is one of Shallcross's new deck heroes Q-Bert is not known for especially slow cutting, is he? So what then is ProgHop?

I genuinely wonder, because I haven't seen that label or categorisation used in any books or magazines so far Does HipHop turntablism equal ProgHop, or is it adventurous HipHop that we now call ProgHop? In that case, what separates Q-Bert from any odd HipHop turntablist stylistically in a genre so entangled in its own past? Of course some will always have more technical skills, but it didn't seem like that was Shallcross's point

Apart from this I have learned very much from your excellent writings on every aspect of turntablism Thanks!
Kjetil Falkenberg Hansen *Trondheim, Norway*

Soda pop stories

I am an Argentine *Wire* reader, very pleased about your notes and reviews Regarding the Global Ear from Buenos Aires (*The Wire* 180) I would like to clear a confusion about Soda Stereo and related artists This great pop band was on the road for 14 years (1983-97) as a trio (Gustavo Cerati, Zeta Bosio and Charly Alberti) They recorded more than ten albums including an MTV *Unplugged* (*Comfort Y Musica Para Volar*) Another parallel project was Gustavo Cerati/Daniel Melero, with only one CD (*Colores Santos*), more experimentally oriented The last band of Cerati is Plan-V, an Argentine-Chilean electronic band, with two CDs recorded
Gustavo Enriquez *Buenos Aires, Argentina*

True confessions

Bless me father, for I have sinned Father, it's been a year since my last confession A Starbucks coffee shop has opened across from the guitar store where I work Father, as I await my twice-daily caffeine squirt to sell said string boxes, I have been leafing and speed reading through my beloved *Wire* The staff have been encouraging me to "Sit, relax, read", and not worry about paying for your perky parchment No more This weekend's Deep Listening Workshop with Pauline Oliveros has kickstarted my conscience I want back into the fold Take my money, Mister Bookseller

And apropos of nothing, what's this *Wire* trend to print letters from Anglo readers living in Asian climes? Interesting Regardless, R Visentin's comments (*The Wire* 182) were bang on, re what shapes and inspires a musician It's often what we don't like and why we don't like it that motivates many players — I see it every day Anyway, it feels good to buy your mag again It feels good to support this music I've loved for so very long
G Forrest *Guelph, Canada*

Philippine fillip

The Wire is the most important magazine Every issue's a treasure of information *The Wire* helps individuals to adjust and to understand modern music We can finally see every country's roots in music But hey, living here in the Philippines makes me feel welcome in your magazine

Filipino artists are like mushrooms sprouting everywhere There's DJ Q-Bert, a Filipino, and the guys from Invisibl Skratch Piklz The group Kulay, which is enjoying good airplay in the UK and the rest of Europe There s the ska band Putzska, which rejected the offer of Moonska label, the band Versus, who recently released their new album on the Caroline label, Mixmaster Mike of The Beastie Boys (*sic*), a true blooded Filipino, Elektra Records' Moonpools And Caterpillars, and Kirk Hammet of Metallica Just be aware of the next big thing Who knows, it may be another Filipino! Keep up the good work
Jay Garcia *Antipolo City Philippines*

Footloose footage

This is a request to anyone out there who has any home videos, Super 8 or any other footage of any aspect of the UK dance scene over the last 30 odd years That includes everything from Mods and soul, ska, Northern soul, jazz funk, lovers' rock, Acid House, ragga, Hardcore and UK Jungle to the UK Garage scene The footage will be used to make an independent visual essay/documentary celebrating British dance culture Any footage relevant to any of these scenes in any way would be very useful in putting together a proper visual history of the creative energies that have made up the UK dance scene
Mark Leckey *PO Box 2241, London W1A 5UD*

Corrections

Issue 184 In the Directory, the e-mail address of the Drag City label was listed incorrectly It should have been *miranda@dragcity.com*
Issue 182 In Multimedia, the Go To column listed the wrong URL for the Noise Website The correct address is *www.ymg.urban.ne.jp/home/paulc*

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Airto: Rhythmsticker

PHOTO JULIAN ANDERSON

WOMAD Festival

Pitching up at Reading for the tenth year running, this global music and arts institution once again hoovers up a huge swathe of World Music. Some of the artists appearing over the three days include Afro-Celt Sound System, Asian Dub Foundation, Guo Yue and Joji Hirota with The BBC Concert Orchestra, Femi Kuti, Ernest Ranglin, Fun-Da-Mental, Gnawa Diffusion, La Bottine Souriante, Rae & Christian, Rizwan Qawwali Group, Tashi Lhunpo Monks, Zap Mama, Waldemar Bastos, Whirl-Y-Gig club tent, plus cabaret, theatre, children's areas and more. Reading Rivermead, 23-25 July, weekend ticket £65, ticketline 0118 939 0930, Web *www.realworld.on.net/womad*

Rhythm Sticks

Annual London festival dedicated to percussion and drumming from around the globe. This year, guest rhythmatists include Airto Moreira's Brazilian Rhythms, bodhran player Tommy Hayes, Latin congolerista Poncho Sanchez, swing legend Louis Bellson, female Indian ensemble Stree Shakti, Hiroshima's Kobayakawa Suigun Taiko Drummers, Master Drummers Of Africa, Trevor Watts's Moire Music Group, Django Bates with Ensemble Bash, session drummer Steve White, Iranian troupe Hamnava, Indo-jazz fusions from Jazz Tattoo, Safri Duo, and more. In addition, multimedia club runners The Big Chill present a five-hour sequence of music, live video, spoken word, radio art, dance and gymnastics featuring Mao, State Of Bengal, Hexstatic, Mercury Dance Theatre, Salt, and a Talvin Singh film (18 July). *Dark Theatre*, meanwhile, is a collaboration between film soundtracker David Arnold, Fourth World percussionist Pete Lockett, and video artist David Simonetti (21). London South Bank Centre, 17-25 July, times/prices vary, 0171 960 4242

Hoxton New Music Days

Composer John Woolrich is artistic director of this first-time festival designed to bring the best British contemporary music into the heart of East London. Working in tandem with New Music groups such as London Sinfonietta, Composers Ensemble and The Brunel Ensemble, he has assembled a programme that includes an evening with trombonist Vinko Globokar, renditions of Stockhausen, Kurt Schwitters, Maxwell Davies, Poul Ruders, Harrison Birtwistle, Louis Andriessen, Jonathan Harvey, Thomas Ades and a host of younger composers, with workshops and various free events as part of the package. London Hoxton Hall and Almeida Theatre, 2-11 July, times/prices vary, 0171 359 4404

Interference: TechGnosis

In the latest mixed media forum co-curated by *The Wire* and the Lux Centre, Californian author Erik Davis talks about his new book *TechGnosis*, exploring the mystical and occult influences behind the 20th century's obsession with information and technology. There will be a presentation of Web based sonic art from the multimedia collective Irational.org, and the night will be soundtracked with a specially prepared mix delivered by DJ Spooky. London Lux Cinema, 15 July, 8pm, £6/£3, booking 0171 684 0201, info 0171 684 2787

Black On White

As part of the Barbican Centre's Bite 99 dance season, this new work by radio artist and soundscaper Heiner Goebbels — a memorial to East German dramatist and theatre director Heiner Muller — involves Ensemble Modern as both interpreters and actors. As well as the interplay of silhouettes and light sculptures, the piece has echoes of exotic musics from across the globe. London Barbican Theatre, 1-3 July, 7.45pm, £25-£8, 0171 638 8891

Strange Attraction

A "non-linear music event" composed of installations and computer art, exploring the relationship of chance to music. Featuring the work of Andy Allenson (AntiRom), Bourbonese Qualk, Max Eastley and others, the mixture of exhibited work and live performance aims to survey the state of generative and fractal processes among digital art practitioners. London Morley Gallery, 8-17 July, 4-7pm, 0171 450 9226, Web *www.strangeattraction.com*

SLAMfest

Tenth anniversary celebrations for George Haslam's Oxford based Improv label SLAM, featuring some of the artists who have contributed to the label over the years. Dreamtime and the duo of Elton Dean and Howard Riley (10 July), and Eric Mingus/Jim Ovorak, Harrison Smith Quartet, and Paul Rutherford/Lol Coxhill/George Haslam (11). London Premises Studios, 10-11 July, 7.30pm, £8/£6 (weekend £12), tickets/info from *slamjuly@aol.com*

Meltdown

The last concerts in the London South Bank Centre's Nick Cave curated beanfeast feature Nina Simone (Royal Festival Hall, 1 July), Blixa Bargeld delivering his performance piece *The Execution Of Precious Memories* (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 1), and Hal Willner's tribute to Harry Smith, which includes contributions from Jarvis Cocker and Cave himself (2). London South Bank Centre, times/prices vary, 0171 960 4242

Sacred Voices Music Village

The London gathering of spiritual singers and ancestral voices from around the world continues into July, with open air pow-wows in Greenwich Park (3-4 July) and Richmond Riverside (10-11). Many cultures are represented, from Tibetan Buddhist monks to Sufi poets from Upper Egypt and the night spirit masters of Moroccan Gnaoua. Also ongoing are talks and exhibitions, plus two gala performances by the season's main players at the Union Chapel (India Pakistan Unity concert, 2, and various artists, 8, 7.30pm, £8/£5). For all Music Village info: tel 0171 456 0400, e-mail *musicvil@dircon.co.uk*

Edinburgh International Jazz & Blues Festival

Highlights of this broad-appeal north of the border jazz season include Greg Osby Quartet, Ravi Coltrane Quartet, Van Morrison, Dr John, Jazz Jamaica and more. Edinburgh various venues, 30 July-8 August, info 0131 467 5200, Website *www.jazzmusic.co.uk*

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David Sylvian

Ten Days Off

Formerly Ten Days Of Techno, this Belgian extravaganza invades Ghent's Starbuilding, a former fish market in the old town centre. Playing live: Speedy J, Justin Berkovi, Bola, Common Factor, Rhinocerose, and among a vast array of DJ sets, you can hear Richie Hawtin, Derrick May, Carl Craig, François Kevorkian, Ed Rush, Optical, Andrew Weatherall, Luke Vibert and more. Ghent Starbuilding, 16–26 July, tel 00 32 9 233 18 69, Web *www.dma.be/p/5voor12*

North Sea Jazz Festival

This Dutch institution takes place, as ever, at the Congress Centre in The Hague, hosting some of the biggest names in post-war jazz and beyond over a packed three days. Headliners include Herbie Hancock, BB King, Youssou N'Dour, Yusef Lateef & Adam Rudolph, Cecil Taylor and Bobby Hutcherson. The festival also spotlights jazz drum legends such as Elvin Jones, Max Roach and Al Foster, as well as a strong Jewish-American presence from the likes of David Krakauer and Anthony Coleman, and the funkier side of nu-jazz dance, including Funki Porcini, Clifford Gilberto, Frederic Galliano, EZ Rollers and Rae & Christian. The Hague, Netherlands, 9–11 July, tel 00 31 15 21 57 756, Web *www.northseajazz.nl*

Festival D'Altitude

Tucked away in the French Pyrenees, this four day fest provides the ground for several collaborations: Marc Ducret & Tim Berne, Didier Petit & Iva Bittova, Daunik Lazro & Carlos Zingaro, and other performances by John Surman, Pino Minafra and more. Luz-Saint-Sauveur, France, 10–13 July, tel 00 33 5 62 92 38 38, fax 00 33 5 62 92 38 39

Oblique Summer Nights

The French Noise Museum label curates three days of potentially explosive noise featuring Starfish Pool, Crescent, DJ Spooky, Hood, Third Eye Foundation, Holosud, ElectroniCAT, Piano Magic, David Grubbs and others. Nevers Maison De La Culture, France, 2–4 July, tel 00 33 3 80 30 42 73, e-mail *NOISE.MUSEUM@wanadoo.fr*

Konfrontationen 99

A selection of tough, hardbitten musics, from free improv to power electronics, form the core of this festival in Austria's Nickeldorf. Artists confirmed so far include: John Butcher Quartet, Norway's Supersilent, Ken Vandermark & Mats Gustafsson's AALY Trio, Georg Grawe Quartet with Barry Guy and Susie Ibarra, Eugene Chadbourne's Hellington Country, Vernon Reid/Elliott Sharp/David Torn Guitar Trio, Pat Thomas/Steve Noble Duo, The Ex, Fennesz/Jim O'Rourke, Farmers Manual, and more. Nickelsdorf Jazz Galerie, Austria, 16–18 July, times/prices vary, tel 00 43 2146 2359, fax 00 43 2146 2776, e-mail *jazzgalerie@xpoint.at*, Web *www.user.xpoint.at/jazzgalerie*

Montreal International Jazz Festival

The 20th annual event that transforms the Canadian metropolis into a giant block party, features over 100 concerts (1–11 July). Beginning with a tribute to Miles Davis that features Cassandra Wilson, Mark Isham and Olu Dara, the festival also welcomes Joe Lovano, Paul Motian Trio, Natacha Atlas, Brazilians Caetano Veloso and Vinicius Cantuaria, John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain's Remember Shakti, Jan Garbarek with The Hilliard Ensemble, McCoy Tyner, Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Louis Sclavis, Tim Brady and modern Turks such as Carl Craig's Innerzone Orchestra, Amon Tobin, 4 Hero and The Herbaliser. There's also, of course, a raft of contemporary jazzers from Canada. Tel 001 514 871 1881, Web *www.montrealjazzfest.com*

Jazz & Altro Festival

Spread across four cities in the Italian region of Apulia, this two week event (5–15 July) takes 'Ludus In Fabula' as its playful theme. Joe Zawinul Syndicate, Tim Berne, Mark Dresser, Ernst Reijseger are the extra-Italian talents joining such local outfits as Dolmen Orchestra, Orchestra Assemblage and Two Little Ensemble. Tel 00 39 080 542 4109, fax 00 39 0883 507508, e-mail *abagnoni@tin.it*

Marsala Doc Jazz 99

Jazz and urban(e) World fusion at this Italian coastal session, including Pat Metheny Trio, Bill Frisell & The Willies, Carla Bley, Dino Saluzzi Family, Vinicius Cantuária, John Scofield Quartet and more. Italy Marsala various venues. 19–25 July, info tel 00 39 0544 405666, fax 00 39 0544 405656, e-mail *ejn@ejn.it*, Web *www.ejn.it*

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Kanji korner: The collection of *The Wire*'s **Invisible Jukebox** features, which was published last year in the UK by Quartet Books (under the brilliantly imaginative title, *Invisible Jukebox*), is about to appear in a Japanese language edition. Tokyo's Kousakusha Workshop will publish the kanji version of the book in the autumn, meanwhile, in America, Incommunicado Press will be publishing a revised and updated edition of the title, also scheduled to appear later this year +++ People win prizes (1): **Robin Rimbaud** aka Scanner, has won this year's Imaginaria award, the digital arts world's equivalent of the Turner Prize, for his collaboration with Paul Farrington called *Sound Polaroids*. An exhibition of all works entered for the prize will take place at London's ICA between 2–31 October +++ People win prizes (2): Rimbaud was one of a panel of judges alongside Kodwo Eshun, Naut Humon, Jim O'Rourke and Laetitia Sonami, at this year's prestigious Ars Electronica centre in Linz, Austria, to present the Golden Nica prize in Digital Musics. Out of a total of more than 500 entries, the 10,000 Euro prize was won by Richard James and Chris Cunningham for the infamous **Aphex Twin** 'Come To Daddy' video. Awards of Distinction went to Ikue Mori, Peter Rehberg and Christian Fennesz +++ And talking of prizes, the award for gathering together the most disparate group of guest artists on a single album goes this month to the Japanese musician **Aki Onda** for *Beautiful Contraption*. Einsturzende Neubauten's Blixa Bargeld, the French guitarist and Rectangle label runner Noel Akchote, UK soundtrack composer Simon Fisher Turner, and vocalist Linda Sharrock, wife of the late free jazz guitar legend Sonny, all put in appearances on a record released by the Tokyo All Access label +++ **Boyd 'Non' Rice**'s 1978 *Pagan Muzak* — conceivably the longest playing long player ever made — is reissued by Mute this month. Though only a 7" single housed in an LP sleeve, its 17 locked grooves can be played at any speed, and its two centres (one on– the other off–) further multiply the number of listener choices. Having emptied the Darwinian philosophy of Ragnar Redbeard, Rice has fixed his sights on Shakespeare — he has completed a script of *Titus Andronicus* for an Australian film company. Promises to be an incredibly strange movie +++ Public Enemy's **Chuck D** launches his new project Confrontation Camp, this month at the fifth Digital Club Festival in New York. Co-produced by the Knitting Factory's Michael Dorf, the festival runs between 20–23 July, broadcasting live on the World Wide Web from a number of New York venues. Confrontation Camp, which also includes PE's notorious Minister of Information Professor Griff, appear on 21 July, go to *www.digitalclubfest.com* for the full story +++ The Jamaican dub instrumentalist **Augustus Pablo** died in May at University Hospital in Kingston, aged 46. He had been suffering from a nerve disorder for some time. Pablo was one of the great legislators of Kingston dub, and his trademark, the melodica, was first used during 1969 sessions with Herman Chin-Loy, from whom Pablo (real name Horace Swaby) took the Pablo alias. His patented 'Far East Sound', which deployed strange minor-key melodies over murderously heavy drums and bass rhythms, created some of the most endearing moments in Jamaican music, preserved on releases such as 1976's *King Tubbys Meets Rockers Uptown* and 1978's *East Of The River Nile*

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Tony Allen

Talking drums

"There's no drummers anymore, only machines," laments Tony Allen, Fela Kuti's former drummer "Who drums? Where are the drummers?"

The fact that restless cosmopolitans still fetch up in Fela's Kalakuta Republic in Lagos in search of rhythmic rebirth is largely down to Allen His drumming is both perfect for the times and completely antithetical to them The Human Loop, Allen spins his polyrhythms into hypnotic swirls of Tantric proportions that recall both the infinity of the SP1200 and the long-lost skills of The Meters' Ziggy Modeliste

"I'm looking forward to seeing some drummers play like me," he continues "I don't know why people don't want to play like that. The discipline is not there They don't have the discipline to keep the pattern going for even three minutes I like to keep the pattern going for ten minutes, sometimes even longer When I play it's like an orchestra by itself"

Allen and Fela started creating their epic grooves in the early 60s when the two discovered a shared passion for jazz, and Allen joined Fela's group, Koola Lobitos "Art Blakey is one of my idols," Allen responds to a question about jazz influences "I like the way he keeps the rhythm going and, especially, his riding There's a lot of things, though Max Roach, for instance his hi-hats, you know? I listened to all the techniques of those guys Elvin Jones The Americans, you see, were trying to send my own thing back to me, so that's why I appreciate it a lot They are trying They were not born where I was born and they have more techniques than rhythm, but most of those guys have travelled to Africa to pick up rhythms and they have used them in their own way I admire them When I used to play jazz with Fela, I played like them If you were listening, you would have been like, 'Oh, are you Art Blakey?' After, I said to myself, 'All right, I want to play like myself now What can I do to be like me?' That's when I started to put my way of playing hi-hats into highlife I changed something there"

While Allen admits to the influence of jazz, he steadfastly denies that James Brown had any impact on Fela's patented style of Afrobeat, despite what many commentators say to the contrary Asked if he was influenced by the Godfather, Allen responds, laughing, "Me, I don't think so Not me anyway I would say it's the opposite They came to our concert. The music director for James Brown sat next to me and tried to write my foot patterns on the manuscript and I was just kind of laughing I haven't really heard anything that's like me from any drummer there Maybe the "Funky Drummer" style, but I don't know"

However it came about, what is fairly certain is that after Fela's group played nightclubs in Los Angeles for six months in 1969, their music became harder and less jazzy and was christened 'Afrobeat' (you can hear this shift taking place on the short, punchy tracks that were reissued by the Sterns label as *The 69 Los Angeles Sessions*) "To me Afrobeat is a combination of a lot of things," Allen explains "It's many rhythms fused together highlife, juju, jazz It's highlife jazz, that's how we started playing with Fela, highlife jazz. It takes a drummer like me to be able to handle it, you know what I mean? When I play, I play like four people, you know what I mean? It's a combination of all these different patterns and I put them together and I play them all at once"

Although Fela never gave the drummer some, preferring to keep the majority of the solos to himself, Allen was the one practising the instrumental voodoo For evidence, listen to any one of the albums which he recorded with Fela's groups in Lagos during the 1970s (many of which have just been reissued in the UK by Talkin' Loud) Fela's wayward saxophone and organ improvisations might hog the mix, but the interlocking of Allen's drum kit with the percussionists and rhythm guitars, a relationship which sounds both loose *and* stunningly precise, is what makes the music groove with such irresistible motion "My drums were the only thing that wasn't written," Allen claims "It was only me that would be able to put something in that music Fela

PHOTO JAY BROOKS

Tony Allen: man in the hood

wrote his music for everyone else, but there were no notes in front of me I would have to find patterns that suited the music, the movement The way I play drums, I see drums moving"

Allen emigrated from the Kalakuta Republic in the early 1980s, released the mind-blowing *NEPA* EP in 1984 for Earthworks, and recorded an album for the French Barclay label in 1989 At the turn of the decade he had connections to Kid Batchelor's London based Warnor's Dance organisation, but since then he has been fairly quiet, doing session work for clients as diverse as the Congolese fusioneer Ray Lema and the London House label Nuphonic But his new album, *Black Voices*, released on the French label Comet, picks up where *NEPA* left off Recorded with the French HipHop producer Doctor L, *Black Voices* is a spacy, dubby version of the original Afrobeat sound that integrates live instruments with 90s studio techniques

"Doctor L mixed "Ariya' [which was released as a single earlier this year] and I was so mad because the electronics were dominating too much," Allen recalls "That's not the way I wanted it. I wanted them to be together, to fit together so that one is not dominating the other one I didn't want to judge him on just that one, so I let him do the album too He did a really nice job, the way I wanted the two to be fused together It's what I've been looking for since I came to Europe Since I left Fela I wanted to do my own Afrobeat, the way I like it, the way I want it for the people, more modern, not just raw Like *NEPA*, that was a different album when compared with Fela I was looking for it to be better Now with all this modern technology, I'm just trying to use what is available now and it worked"

PETER SHAPIRO Black Voices *is out now on Comet For details of Talkin Loud's Fela Kuti reissues, see Soundcheck*, The Wire *184*

US Maple

Hairballing America

US Maple: the hairshirts are at the cleaners

Odder than a nine dollar note but as visceral as AC/DC, US Maple create music that actually sounds like — avert your eyes! — post-rock. Guitarists Pat Shippy and Todd Rittmann, singer Al Johnson and drummer Pat Samson grab rock music by the wrong end and misuse it, efficiently, repeatedly, gloriously This is definitely music that comes after, or is left over from, rock.

"We began in Chicago, Illinois, early in 1995," Johnson explains "The four of us met near the corner of Grand and Western Avenues to discuss a way in which to erase the rock 'n' roll from our collective minds Having grown up in Chicago during the late 70s stamped a delicious hard rock imprint into everyone concerned So we set out to devise a method for reorganising the rock 'n' roll, keeping what we feel are its most important core elements terror, mischief, elegance, song, scummy chops, etc"

The group's 1995 debut, *Long Hair In Three Stages* (Skin Graft), was a hairball coughed up in the face of indie rock mopers Cleanly produced and recorded by Jim O'Rourke, the album documents the group standing tall, playing what could roughly be called songs with a guitar style reminiscent of musicians such as Fred Frith and Derek Bailey but with the glee of a garage group cutting its first 45 Rittmann and Shippy's guitars are the guts of a Rube Goldberg contraption made audible, power chords rolling into unison squeals and igniting flurries of chicken scrabbling Drummer Pat Samson seems to play a song that nobody ever joins him in, while singer Al Johnson dares you to figure out what language he's singing in It's English, actually, and his words are worth unlocking Titles like "Letter To ZZ Top" (which sounds more like a letter to Big Flame) and "When A Man Says Ow" made me sit up, but lines such as *"The state was bad bad and all the girls there, well, they all got a groom"* made me want more

I got more in January 1997, as a witness to two weeks of US Maple touring the coldest parts of North America Johnson, wearing gloves and the same model Adidas tracksuit as Samson, stalked the stage, twitching and whispering at top volume like a businessman ordering something naughty over the phone Shippy and Rittmann, in suits, looked like bored prep-schoolboys held back for rewiring the school's alarm system Sometimes they'd stand on chairs and chew the ceiling or wander into the audience and sit for a few numbers, playing all the while Samson remained the coach, valiantly trying to get everyone around the track just once Each night's set managed to sound totally improvised, though none were More so than on record, the music was a proud distillation of all the sounds songs try to suture over the music of sound bursting forth with a green, happy 'Ow' Non-believers danced to music they couldn't name

In 1997 the group released *Sang Phat Editor* (Skin Graft), a set of convulsions that leaves songs way behind The guitar disorientation captured here is potent but completely distinct from the mayhem created by distortion pedals and volume (Rittmann and Shippy use no effects other than amplification) And now comes *Talker*, the third album, recorded with engineer Martin Bisi and producer Michael Gira Their first release for the Drag City label, *Talker* is rock music x-rayed to a dark, murmuring crisp Songs like "Bumps And Guys" and "Running From Kabob" confirm Johnson's skill at revealing the specific kicks of English rubbed against itself Irregular as Henri Chopin and as human as a field holler, it is completely up-to-date without deviating from US Maple's stubborn genre of one The current focus on electronic music has neither shaken their faith in rock catharsis nor turned them into contentious Luddites Johnson, a fan of Nobukazu Takemura's *Child And Magic*, says "Electronic music is widely popularised now, which means more people, more critics and more garbage It's our belief that Powerbooks are fast replacing heroin as today s rock staple I ask you, which one is cheaper and yields better results?"

Johnson sums up the group's place in the universe "Once in Cleveland, we were playing outside on a raised stage overlooking a courtyard It was night and we were finishing our last song When we finished, we just stood there, doing nothing but being still Out of the crowd, three dogs joined us, one mongrel even put his front

two paws on the front stage monitor wedge Together, the seven of us stood staring into the audience, unified somehow, quietly understanding each other, knowing that, from that point on, it was always going to be us against them' **SASHA FRERE-JONES** Talker *is out now on Drag City*

Nobukazu Takemura

Bitmapped B-boy

"Even now I still consider my music HipHop," shrugs Kyoto's Nobukazu Takemura, even though his latest release, *Scope*, doesn t contain a single beat If the music on this new CD, Takemura's album debut for the American Thrill Jockey label, is the mutant offspring of Farmers Manual's digital spazz and David Tudor s vocoder corruption of Cage's *Solos For Voice*, the earlier *Meteor* EP makes a better case for his HipHop allegiance Opening with a cartoon soundtrack of pitter-pattering drums, it is joined halfway in by a rousing storm of boogie-down handclaps, which capture the era of fat laces and parachute pants with far greater precision than the latest crop of electro revivalists ever could

Even here, however, the rhythms resist all attempts to be pinned down to anything like a groove It s all a vast distance from the fusions of instrumental jazz, smooth soul and mellow beats which he released under his DJ Takemura, Child's View and Spiritual Vibes aliases So where's the HipHop in his step?

"I was a scratch DJ originally," Takemura explains, flipping through his memory book of former battle associates, among them Cash Money, GM Yoshi and a pre-Mo' Wax DJ Krush "I belonged to the old HipHop generation in Japan I was drawn to HipHop because of the way of reversing sound, or time, in scratching"

He abandoned competition on the eve of his first DMC battle, miffed by the empty posturing and grandstanding expected of championship DJs His interests have always been more methodical "I've been using a computer and a sequencer for years, but it's only within the last three or four that I ve begun working with audio files directly," he says "The technique of the 'transform scratch' that prevailed in the BDs is similar to the randomisation of an audio file by a computer"

Such parallels are instinctive to Takemura Since he dropped the DJ from his name and left the decks behind to focus on production ("The club scene was very bored with me," he says), the PC has gradually become his music's chief disorganising principle Beginning with 1997's *Child & Magic* CD, and continuing through *Funfair*, which was released by the American Bubble Core label, he has made steady progress away from the paste-up aesthetic of the sampler and toward the sonic microscopy of digital signal processing Having said that, Takemura asserts

Nobukazu Takemura

that the difference is merely [illegible] "To use the computer for me means only that I can do by computer what I did before by MIDI, turntable, sampler and tape recorder," he explains. "It's convenient to make music more quickly, but I'm not influenced in my conception by using the computer"

A mass exodus from analogue to digital has become a characteristic reaction to club culture's current stasis, and regardless of his claims to avoid the medium's message, it's tempting to judge Takemura's digital turn as the novel first musings of a technology tourist. It's certainly opened doors for him — he collaborated with former Japan members Richard Barbieri and Steve Jansen on 1997's *Changing Hands*, and made music for a fashion show by the Japanese designer Issey Miyake, to name two such instances. But *Scope* is also ambitious in the extreme The opening cut, "On A Balloon", is 22 minutes of slight tone bleating, jittery bass rumbles, and sweet, Oval-esque arpeggiating melodies "Icefall" takes a two minute refrain and stretches it out to ten, constructing implausibly charming themes out of disc-skipping repetition. The Mego-like "Taw" is all fluttering chirps and panning rumbles of digital static — easily *Scope*'s weirdest cut.

With a childhood fascination for punk and New Wave, and musical heroes including John Coltrane, Afrika Bambaataa and Robert Wyatt, Takemura's musical tent is pitched at some bizarre crossroads. Equally apparent — especially in *Scope*'s "Kepler" and the B-side of *Meteor*, "Wax And Wane" — is the influence of American minimalist composers, such as La Monte Young and Steve Reich (indeed, he remixed Reich's *Proverb* for the recent *Reich Remixed* compilation). "I prefer music constructed by an impulse — the impromptu melody rather than what's composed from an outline," Takemura says. "Not only Reich but all of minimalism. They used a lot of the old Japanese instruments, gagaku [Japanese traditional court music], and a lot of Asian music, so I can feel their sound more naturally."

Scope's appearance on Thrill Jockey is perhaps as notable as the record itself. The connection was initiated when Tortoise requested Takemura as an opening act during their Japanese tour. "I didn't even know their name!" he admits "I ran to get their record at the music shop and was surprised to listen it. Their form and style was quite different from mine, but I felt sympathy with them in a deeper sense." The sentiment proved likewise. "They listened to my music from a point of view different from many other people I came to love their music

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and they've encouraged me in mine"

Despite the apparent conceptual density of his music, Takemura insists he's after a quality that's anything but high concept. His various musical ventures are littered with references to youth and childhood — Child's View, *Child & Magic*, his label Childisc — and the lilting melodies and singsong vocal snippets that kaleidoscope through his tracks confound any notion that he's out to make 'difficult' art. "I make music so that I can be absorbed in it, not to say something through it," he concludes. "The importance is not in the composition but the listening and making, removing preconceptions. In truth, making music for me is like a child humming." **SEAN COOPER** Scope *and* Meteor *are out now on Thrill Jockey*

Michael J Schumacher

Droning in dream time

"The most interesting advance in 20th century music is that composers started concentrating on the actual sonority, focusing the listener's activity in the ear itself," asserts the New York drone musician Michael J Schumacher, refreshed after a night performing piano works at La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's Dream House. The unanticipated excellence of Schumacher's recently released set of guitar pieces, *Fidicin Drones*, becomes more comprehensible when you can trace it back to the gestation chamber of radical minimalism.

Schumacher, now 38 years old, met Young through Charles Curtis, a cellist who had participated in a performance of Young's *Trio For Strings*. "I had some interest in *The Well-Tuned Piano*, but it simply took off," he says. "I found a strong affinity, the kind of feeling that you want to do things, or you have things that haven't really found the outlet yet, but you feel that they are there, and his music opened up a lot of territory."

Although Schumacher was aware of Fred Frith's extensions of guitar technique, it was the example of Young's piece for bowed gong that directed him down the path of exploration leading to *Fidicin Drones*, named after the street in Berlin where they were created. The recording reveals the nature of his interest in the electric guitar, the album contains more or less static pieces, realised through a technique developed in 1991. "I put a stick in the strings and bow the stick," he says, "so the strings are all vibrating sympathetically. And I have tried different tunings. I wanted a sustained sound and I wanted a certain sonority. When you bow the strings directly it doesn't work so well."

Two of the drones on the CD have an alluring softness. Between them lies 14 minutes of agitated crackle. In both cases, the quality of the sound is the music's compelling aspect. Its emphasis was inspired by Young, John Cage, David Tudor and Morton Feldman, all composers concerned with duration as a primary factor in the experience of music. But Schumacher explores the duration factor of his compositions most fully in his installation work. "My installation pieces are infinite," he explains. "They evolve without time limit, they just keep going. They are computer generated, random generation yet very controlled. They're static but there's a lot of variety, and something I'm interested in is grouping a variety of ideas within a structure that evolves like a planetary constellation, with things revolving around it, coming into focus and going out of focus. Not necessarily building to a particular point, although that may happen."

In the past Schumacher has performed live in conjunction with his installations. Since 1996, he and his wife, the Swiss artist Ursula Scherrer, have been running Studio Five Beekman, a multimedia gallery in New York. He describes it simply as "a room with 16 speakers, 16 channels of sound very sonically isolated". The gallery has presented installations by David Behrman, Phill Niblock, Alvin Lucier, Tom Hamilton and David First, as well as Schumacher himself. He recognises that his gallery, like Young's Dream House, answers a real need among listeners to contemporary music. It creates "a context so that an audience can appreciate music that doesn't necessarily work in the concert hall, or even a club. I think that's a big issue at the moment for a lot of people. I think that what happened with Philip Glass is that when you move into the concert environment it's a very seductive situation, big audiences and great players. Once you move into that environment the music will change, it will become more like 19th century music, pushing the audience along in a certain way. I think it's unconscious that a composer will work that way, but people feel the disparity there and keep looking for alternatives."

Schumacher is himself classically trained, and has written a lot of notated music. Formative lessons with Seymour Bernstein, his piano teacher in New York "opened up a lot of worlds, mainly in the classical field". He proceeded to the University of Indiana where he studied with the expressionistic electronic composer John Eaton, and Bernhard Heiden, a former student of Paul Hindemith. At the time Schumacher's taste was for Bartok, Stravinsky and, a little later, Anton Webern. Currently, his notated work is designed to provide a basis for improvisation. Indeed, improvised music forms another strand of activity. In 1997, he collaborated with Donald Miller, guitarist with the free-blowing cacophonists Borbetomagus, on the CD *Flood*. More recently, Charles Curtis has joined them to record a live LP. "He adds a bit of melody, and Donald is doing his thing, and I'm doing a kind of tambura, as it were," says Schumacher. "I am currently working on a performance set-up that you might describe as David Tudor and a laptop. I am looking a little more towards being able to perform." **JULIAN COWLEY** Fidicin Drones *is out now on Colorful Clouds For Acoustics*

Michael J Schumacher

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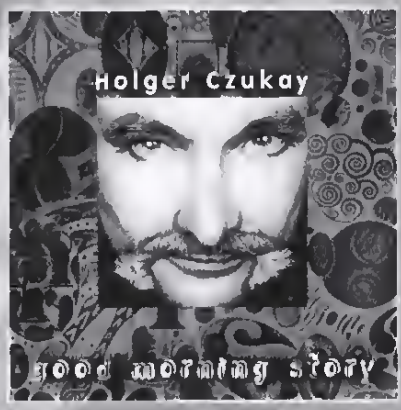

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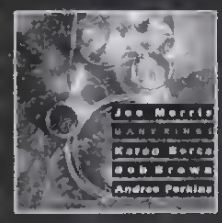

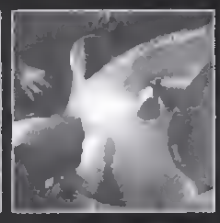

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Brno

Two hours' drive east from Prague is the city of Brno, the capital of Moravia. Though it has its fair share of proud regional boasts — the composer Janacek and the artist Mucha, not to mention a folk tradition rich in Hungarian, Slovakian and Romanian influences — Brno still feels like it is culturally overshadowed by its more Germanic Bohemian neighbours.

Moravia's rich folk tradition is all very well, says the Prague DJ Liquid A (aka Roman Truska, who spent the 80s playing with Brno rock group, Ser Un Peyjalero), but it has been indelibly corrupted by the privileges it enjoyed under the communist regime, which harnessed its songs celebrating rural life to its own agenda. Indeed, he says, he grew to hate Moravian folk music for its associations with the state. As an antidote to state radio's sanitised music output, Truska and a small group of Brno record collectors would scour black market stalls for "strange and goofy sounds" from the West and then disseminate their finds among friends.

Meanwhile, musicians whose talent, temperament or political inclination prevented their wholehearted participation in the state's bucolic travesties of Moravia's traditions, had no place else to go but underground.

By the time communism had collapsed at the end of the 80s, Brno was not only a vital underground centre, it was also distinctive enough to have an identifiable 'Brno sound', created by musicians such as Iva Bittova, Pavel Fajt and Vladimir Vaclavek. According to Bittova, "There is always something about being in our region. In this current regime we can't really speak about an underground. The tension against the state is not as strong as it used to be before the revolution. But it will come again; the fight against commercialism, materialism, betrayal. At least, I hope so."

More than a "flagship for Moravian folk", as Liquid A describes her, Iva Bittova has angels in her violin and demon electricity in her bow. The breadth of her musical vision, which aligns folk, classical, rock and improvisation with an impish avant sensiblity, quickly secured her a place in the international contemporary music network. Last year, for instance, Bittova played an old church in the centre of Prague with another violinist, Dorothea Kellarova, in a concert titled "44 Duets For Two Violins By Béla Bartók". Starting at the back of the church, they each marched slowly up the aisles either side of the audience while singing and bowing their instruments. Eventually they came together on stage, where they raced, scraped and plucked their way through attenuated Bartók, with wind-up toys and theatrics added for good measure.

Bittova comes from a musical family: her father was a multi-instrumentalist playing the cymbal (Moravian dulcimer), double bass, guitar and trumpet. For all her international standing — she has collaborated with, among others, Fred Frith and Chris Cutler, and The Kronos Quartet have approached her with a commission — Bittova regularly plays with her fellow Brno musicians, and she still drops in on Professor Rudolf Stastny at the Janacek Academy for violin lessons. During the old regime, the state's musical academies weren't so welcoming. She was rejected by the Janacek Conservatory of Music on account of her poor scores in the Marxist-Leninist section of the entrance exam. As a consequence she lost herself in theatre, working with the celebrated Brno satirists and absurdists, Divadlo Na Provazku (Theatre On A String).

A full house turned out at the beautiful Palac Akropolis — an old theatre turned music venue, with main hall, DJ bar, coffee shop and performance space — for the launch of her new album, *Iva Bittova*, released on the Elektra Nonesuch label. Sharing the stage with three microphones, her violin and a collection of toys, Bittova treated the guests to a magnum of champagne and a 90 minute performance that encompassed a recording career that began in 1987 with the *Bittova + Fajt* LP.

Bittova sings as she plays the violin. She screeches, bellows, harmonises, cackles and coos, slurring notes and ringing out harmonics while stomping her foot for occasional rhythmic grounding. Her performance ranged from hardcore chord-based works to staccato pieces with plucked notes on the fingerboard, with her voice lilting then squawking on top. Occasionally sounding like Bartók meets Teenage Jesus, she went from mournful to manic to delicate to imbecilic in seconds.

Suddenly, she rested her violin and started belting out sleazy jazz riffs on a pair of kazoos, before switching to a baby's rattle with a horn attachment and wind-up handle. Her voice — or more accurately, voices — is an astonishing instrument, whether it's singing straight folk style or screeching like a tree full of crickets.

She extended her insect infatuation into the encore. Her eyes followed the insistent buzzing progress of an imaginary insect, while increasing the pitch and fever of its buzz with her violin bow. The buzzing turned to crazed vocal acrobatics, as her foot stamped out an accompaniment.

Her performance is a circus and a sci-fi flick, an opera and a wake, all at once. Or as she puts it: "It's the wholesale penetration of communication and energy which wells from the brain, heart and soul, and connects with the ground, the earth, the road, the fingers playing notes on the violin. It is very natural for me and the feelings and emotions become manifest in certain movements which I often don't realise." Her Moravian folk roots might still show, but by now Iva Bittova is her own tradition. **JULIAN HARRIS**

PHOTO: MARK MILLER

Cat gut her tongue: Iva Bittova

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Carl Craig has consistently outmanoeuvred attempts to place him in the pantheon of Detroit Orchestra advances the programme into the realm of digital Gothic and organic architecture.

against

"Got a nine?" asks Carl Craig, staring into the hot studio lights A what? "A nine You know a gat" He smiles in disbelief at the blank and puzzled faces around him The photo session has been going pretty well up until now "Doesn't anyone have a handgun I can use?" he despairs "I gotta look hard"

Why? "I'm from Detroit," he replies, laughing "I've got an image to keep up"

Images can take care of themselves It's a lot harder trying to keep up with Carl Craig these days One of the central figures to emerge from the Detroit Techno scene in the past ten years, alongside Juan Atkins, Kevin Saunderson, Kenny Larkin and Derrick May, here is a man who makes serious points with a lightness of touch, communicating ideas through sudden and surprising changes of perspective The idea of photographing him waving a gun around is so ridiculous, it has got to be worth a try An old boombox pumps out Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised", while someone goes off in search of a sidearm

"There have been so many revolutions that have not been televised," Craig comments, nodding at the tape machine "Revolutions in music that have never been acknowledged As you can see from Gil Scott-Heron or Sun Ra or George Clinton, there are a lot of brothers out there who think beyond shit, and they're not scared to admit that Whereas within a lot of black music, unfortunately, a lot of people are really reserved So the usual thing is to have a gun or ice, or have a big gold chain, or have a shaped beard and slicked back hair or whatever I'd like to see a lot more of that out-there shit come back Why can't someone come out with, like, a space suit on? Or rollerskates or green fatigues with platforms on? Some big, sparkly sequinned Bootsy Collins type platforms that would make 'em about seven feet tall!"

Talking to Carl Craig is definitely not about reinforcing preconceptions As far as he's concerned, whatever you thought Techno was about, it will definitely have changed by the time you read this Since the deep electronic dawning of Detroit in the late 80s, his music has gone a long way towards redefining how beats and ideas go together Following on from Psyche's "Crackdown", his 1989 vinyl debut on Derrick May's legendary Transmat label, Craig has made a career out of sidestepping expectations of Techno Where Underground Resistance relentlessly pounded the heavy urban asphalt, Craig's floating melody lines shimmered and glistened, where May got abstracted and twitchily serious, Craig would slip in a more playful human note, and where Eddie Flashin' Fowlkes turned a flickering strobe light onto the future, Craig's music expressed doubts and concerns with the most affecting simplicity Having released two of his most ambitious albums, *Landcruising* and *More Songs About Food and Revolutionary Art*, under his own cognizance, he's now set to scramble his listeners' thought processes still further with *Programmed*, the keenly awaited debut album from his Innerzone Orchestra project.

The outer limits

A gentle, humorous individual with a sly take on just how quickly people's minds can stagnate, Craig has often chosen to remain hidden behind an array of codes, constructs and aliases, releasing records as Innerzone Orchestra, 69,

Techno heroes. His new 'live' Innerzone
Words: Ken Hollings. Photos: Dean Belcher

nature

Psyche and Paperclip People The external features may differ slightly, but the drive and a delicacy of tone charactensing his best music are very hard to conceal As a consequence, his evolving ideas and themes run like a secret programme throughout his work, with Craig occasionally revisiting and revising his own history to serve the needs of the present *Programmed*, for example, includes a lush new interpretation of "At Les", from *More Songs About Food And Revolutionary Art*, and a ferocious helter-skelter version of Innerzone Orchestra's euphoric 1992 single, "Bug In The Bassbin"

"I try to lace concepts together," he explains, "or else how else will you know that it's something I've done?"

Does his use of aliases reflect a need for different identities? "I try to make the Carl Craig stuff the *real* Carl Craig, but there are parts of me that I don't feel can be narrowed down to just Carl Craig, so it makes it interesting to do a Paperclip People project. I just do tracks and songs, or whatever I feel like, and then call it Paperclip People or 69 or whatever it might be Just to do it as Carl Craig, I don't think it would be as much fun It's almost like going to a costume ball sometimes and just not being yourself, or like being an actor "

Craig's predilection for disguises squares itself with the notion that one has to dissimulate or hide one's true self in order to make progress Or, as Descartes put it, "Masked, I advance" "I agree with that," nods Craig "I definitely agree with that."

In 1995, however, Craig chose to release the awesome *Landcruising* album under his own name One of the most conceptually tight and musically

disciplined Techno albums to come out of Detroit, *Landcruising* has been described by Craig as a soundtrack album. But a soundtrack to what?

Craig mimes holding a steering wheel. "Just driving," he replies. "My life is driving. I come from Detroit. Every time my family took a trip, my dad was like, 'No. No planes', and I'd been taking planes so much while DJing and other things that I just felt that it was a good idea to return to a habit that I enjoy. And I do enjoy driving. I'll drive by myself to New York, which is like a 12 hour drive, and I won't have much of a problem with that. Culture in Detroit is about being seen in your car, and that's something relevant to what the project is."

As a continuation of Kraftwerk's *Autobahn*, the CD opens with a car door being unlocked and slammed, a key sliding into the ignition and a motor springing into life. But similarities stop there. In place of Kraftwerk's happily singing automobiles and electronic jingles praising the domesticated splendours of the motorway, Craig conjures up a stark and unforgiving sonic terrain. Laconic titles like "They Were", "One Day Soon" and "A Wonderful Life" hint at the profound sense of sadness and loss which pervades the project. This is one landscape you want to keep on moving through. The effect is enhanced by Craig's use of guitar on the opening tracks, especially the long, serpentine melody lines running through the bleakly melancholic "Mind Of A Machine". "It's all backwards," Craig asserts. "I played it; but I haven't played guitar since then." He shrugs. "Before that I hadn't played guitar in ten years, so maybe I should. . ." he pauses, grinning. "Come up with some punk rock shit!"

Well, why not? Craig's interest in music was sparked by listening to his elder brother's copy of Led Zeppelin's *Houses Of The Holy*. Recalling the group's appeal, he says, "They were funky. They had this crazy kind of instigative funk which wasn't like real funk, but the way in which all the sounds came together was just bad. So that album has haunted me for years. And Zappa's *Zoot Allures* was one I was really dope on. There were a lot of funk records that used guitars, like The Isley Brothers, you know?"

But Techno has a short memory — Craig was criticised for his use of electric guitars on *Landcruising*, and for his subsequent live sets with a 'jazz' trio that included a drummer and double bassist. *Programmed* extends his use of live instruments, recombining the source contributions of drummer Francisco Molina, keyboardist Craig Taborn, violinist Michael Smith, plus additional theremin, strings and flute, with Craig himself playing bass and keyboards.

"With Techno, everybody got so serious, and it was just like, 'Techno has got to be electronic sounds. There can't be any rock guitar, and that's the reason you're doing this is because it's against the grain.' So many people have these opinions about how your music should be and why you did it. And I'm like, 'No, that's not the reason why. I like guitars. I used to try to be Prince.' So I'm not scared of my influences. But it was funny because I got slagged by people for using guitar on *Landcruising*. People were like, 'Why do you put guitars on your album?' And the next time I see them, they're all listening to guitar records."

Dark shadows

Around the time *Landcruising* was released, Planet E Records — the company Craig launched in 1991 with 69's *Four Jazz Funk Classics* EP — released a compilation CD, *Elements Of And Experiments With Sound*. (The label was named after a communications satellite, not the drug.) Featuring head-bending futurist funk from the likes of Flexitone, Urban Tribe and his own Paperclip People, and packaged in a clear plastic petri dish, it took a measure of just how far electronic sound culture had spread and developed since 1989, when Craig first emerged as part of Derrick May's Rythim Is Rythim project. Although aesthetic and business problems eventually destabilised their relationship, Craig still cites May as a mentor. Indeed, they appeared together as recently as 1997, on a track called "Frustration" — a baleful piece of sliding bass tones, plangent keyboard runs and chattering electronic percussion — from Craig's *More Songs About Food And Revolutionary Art*.

"'Frustration" dates from around the time when Derrick and I were still working together, around 90 or 91," Craig recalls. "It was very difficult because there were so many people making demands on Derrick's time that he would get really upset. We'd sit there, and by the time we could actually get to work on something, it would be three o'clock in the morning, and I'd have gotten over there at seven the night before. So it

was a strange kind of vibe I asked Derrick what we should call it, and he said, '"Frustration", because I'm frustrated' He was just kidding, but I kept it as that and I think he was a little upset about that, because he likes those real "Kaotic Harmony This Is Some Beyond Shit" kind of titles But I've always felt very earthly, and that frustration was a very human thing, and it came right into play through most of our working relationship together"

Released under his own name, *More Songs* saw Craig replacing the sparse minimalist gestures of *Landcruising* with something far more filigreed — a powerful electronic dust storm sweeping through the world's communication channels Television voices are scrambled into a malevolent approximation of chattering extraterrestials on "Alien Talk", while "Act 2' features the entire opening sequence from *Landcruising* masked by a wiry, incessant keyboard loop Tracks such as "Domina", "Televised Green Smoke" and "Red Lights" hint at dark, emotionally charged scenes uncurling in the seediest parts of the city Where did such conceptual weirdness come from?

"I had met a lot of different people and heard a lot of different theories and philosophies," he answers "I had always seen music as being an artform, but now it became a question of how I could relate it to other artforms Before, it was just the music, but now it was like there were a lot of underground motherfuckers out there who were doing all kinds of stuff It wasn't just music It was art, buildings, and this was kinda my acknowledgement of that. "Televised Green Smoke" is just the sense of smoke actually being televised in some way, but the TV screen is usually green when it's off It's kind of strange Like with "Red Lights" I think maybe I was seeing it to be less industrial and more visually colourful I've never really seen colour in music before and I still don't see it that much, either when I hear music or when I make it, but it's there"

Located firmly at the project's centre was Craig s concept of revolutionary art one that has nothing to do with formal preoccupations but rejoices instead in the overturning of received opinion Among those artists Craig considers capable of effecting a change of consciousness, he lists Catalan architect Antonin Gaudi, whose biomorphic art nouveau buildings impressed him greatly "He runs Barcelona," he enthuses "His structures are the most dominant ones in Barcelona, and the amazing thing is, he was doing that at the turn of the century So far beyond, yet very archaic in what he was doing Architecture is a big deal for me right now Architecture and furniture design"

Craig also cites the way Detroit resident Tyree Guyton used urban junk, such as dolls, discarded shoes, pictures and crosses, to transform abandoned buildings in his neighbourhood Unlike Gaudi's visionary architecture, or the magnificent Watts Towers of Los Angeles, Guyton's structures have now been demolished by the civic authorities

"They've knocked down almost everything just recently," Craig confirms "Tyree's thing was that he was trying to beautify his neighbourhood in a way that was different. To try to do it any other way would mean either putting a lot of money into the neighbourhood and building the structures up, or knocking them down Detroit's concept was to knock 'em down He didn't have the money to make these structures workable, so he d take a house and paint polka dots on it in different colours, or put toy animals on it, and all kinds of stuff He turned one area where houses had been knocked down into a park lined with different shoes and a decorated school bus, and it was like going into this weird *Alice In Wonderland* kinda thing It was beautiful It was also one of the biggest tourist attractions in Detroit But the majority of the people that live in Detroit are all Old School and just hated it When I first saw it I thought it was amazing, but I felt it got a bit tired and that he should have gone on to do other things I hope that getting it knocked down will help him see something that's on a grander scale"

"This is not a revolution against government," a dark, digitised voice announces, after the final cybernetic storm on *More Songs About Food And Revolutionary Art* recedes into pulsating silence *"This is a revolution against ignorance"*

One step beyond

Meanwhile new ideas were taking shape on the dancefloor A complex aesthetic based on immediacy and surprise was coming into existence In 1992, the flailing breakbeats of Innerzone Orchestra's "Bug In The Bassbin" impacted heavily on London's emergent drum 'n' bass scene, while Craig continued his manipulations of sound as a DJ His *DJ Kicks* mix CD, on Berlin's K7 label, records the results of his jagged, muscular retooling of House rhythms, in which loops, cuts and samples are slammed hard against each other

"The concept of *DJ Kicks* was to do something over and beyond the usual mix CD,' he comments "I don't really consider myself a great DJ like Frankie Knuckles or Roger Sanchez or Derrick May, so they're going to be technically better I wanted to do more of what was within my skills, which was on a production level"

The crash edits of *DJ Kicks* prefigure the strange switches and collisions found on *Programmed* Filled with voices, beats and dense musical eruptions, *Programmed* is a complex soundtrack to a fragmenting future Titles like "Manufactured Memories", "Monsters" and "The Beginning Of The End" evoke the cheap dystopian imagery of late-night horror flicks and sci-fi movies Standing in sharpest contrast to the album's dark veins of imagery, however, is Craig's tenderly deconstructed cover version of the old Stylistics hit, "People Make The World Go Round" Such style shifts consistently undermine listeners' expectations, keeping them on the alert

"It's great because you want people to pay attention to what you do, and if that's what keeps their attention then that's wonderful Different people, of course, are going to take it different ways Some people will hope that it's a commercial pop record where every song sounds the same They might hear "People Make The World Go Round" and think the whole album's going to be like that, and it's gonna be a nice surprise to see them throwing away their CDs because it doesn't have acoustic guitars all the way through The concept of putting *Programmed* together was that it started out more energetic and then kinda calmed down towards the end "Bug In The Bassbin" was kept almost as the finale of the whole thing"

Where does the thinking behind Innerzone Orchestra come from? "Innerzone is derived from William Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch* I thought Interzone would have been great for a label name but then I pondered on that for a while and I thought about the connections between 'urban and 'inner' Then the actual meaning has come to be that the Innerzone is within your own mind, and 'Orchestra' is the concept that even a single person can be an orchestra, by translating your ideas into electronics and by making this glorious orchestral composition just through using synthesizers

"I used to put these press releases into every album, talking about Innerzone Orchestra as 'green fluffy carpet lint from Mars', or something like that. I can't remember exactly what, but it was something off the hook."

Tales from the darkside

Craig has adopted another new alias for this project Blakula Derived from William Crain's 1972 blaxploitation classic, *Blacula*, and its 1973 sequel, *Scream, Blacula, Scream*, Blakula is a blood-drinking manifestation of unstoppable desire in a collapsing social space

"There's a song on the CD called "Blakula", which I did while watching *Scream, Blacula, Scream*," he explains, 'and it was like a soundtrack to that There was something about the character that made me feel akin to it Ever since I was a kid people would say I look like Eddie Munster because I've got this peak, you know" One finger flicks up to indicate his hairline 'And I've always been intrigued by

vampires Blakula's like a mix between the vampires from *Interview With A Vampire* and Dracula from *Andy Warhol's Blood For Dracula* A strange combination, a strange femininity that's still very masculine in some way What I got out of *Blacula* was that he was just getting his shit on You know, shit happens forever but you're cool forever," he laughs "That's my whole thing" His voice drops to a spectral, aristocratic purr "Cool forever Immortal coolness It also makes it kind of funny to have an alter ego and come out in the middle of a show as Blakula with the cape on and everything You know, almost like "The Humpty Dance" with Digital Underground, where Shock G was also Humpty Hump?"

Back in 1972, classically trained actor William Marshall's portrayal of Blacula was hailed as a breakthrough in what is regarded as the first black horror movie It's a tough concept to grapple with, however, even within the context of the futuristic Techno funk to be found on *Programmed* Craig agrees "I think if you took a black man and made him into Hannibal Lecter, he would be the scanest thing in movies because there's always this weird horror that people have of black men in America especially So imagine if Hannibal Lecter was black, people would not leave their houses or go into black neighbourhoods because they would have this stereotype that all black people are like Hannibal Lecter But because there are so many less stereotypes about white people, you can do that, you can be Jason out of *Friday The 13th*, or whatever I think it would be cool to change from Blakula to Hannibal Lecter now I'm serious, it would fuck a lot of people up"

Black reworkings of old Universal horror films have created freaky turbulence in the past Consider the artwork for Parliament's *The Clones Of Dr Funkenstein*, complete with monsters, mad scientists and hunchback assistants Craig nods enthusiastically "That was a great cover, just amazing," he enthuses "I remember that from [when I was] a kid That's potent The whole concept that George Clinton came up with was so theatrical compared with what was usually considered soul or funk or black culture I'm surprised it was accepted in America by American blacks He was a brother on some other shit"

Who else but a mad scientist like Clinton could ever make doing nothing look so professional? "Yeah, Clinton was a general, you know, and I kind of see myself as a mix between General McArthur and the Nutty Professor in that I'm in charge of this shit, but I don't know how to be in charge So it's just like, 'Oh well, let's try this ' and then it goes all haywire" He grins "But that's cool"

The twilight zone

The title *Programmed* implies the controlling presence of someone, or something, outside the programme

"I am the Programmer," Craig asserts, leaving little doubt about who's in charge of the project "A programmer is not only a person who manipulates computers — a programmer can also be a conductor My role is that I'm a conductor of the whole thing as well as a computer manipulator I use live elements on the album and basically cut them up in some way, or place them in another context to make up one finished programme That was the concept when I started not to have just a bunch of guys jamming, but to make breaks out of it, or take a keyboard line, switch it around and change it without altering anything else, because we have the technology to do that, and that's what I tried to do"

One particularly stark moment on *Programmed* is "Architecture" Partly inspired by the visual and sound design — more than the dialogue — of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, Craig laid the foundations for the piece with Richie Hawtin at the latter's studio just across the Canadian border from Detroit

"Well, you know there's always been this rivalry because he's from Windsor and we're from Detroit," Craig explains "A lot of people were really pissed off that he had this success that was beyond a lot of our successes and they felt threatened by it. But Richie's a great guy He does a lot of modular work I don't know how much on *Consumed* was modular, but some of things were from his modular synthesizer," he says, referring to Hawtin's 1998 Plastikman album "So I went over there and watched *Blade Runner* and jacked around a little bit, then made some sounds and sequences I took them back to my place, sampled the pieces that I wanted, and then made the rest of it"

Another surprising intervention is the spoken Dutch introduction to "Manufacured Memories"

"I work with an agency in Holland," Craig remarks "Actually there's a lot of Techno people from Detroit who have great careers playing in Holland, because the Dutch can be very excited over this kind of music We played [the] Ten Days Of Techno [festival] in Ghent as Innerzone Orchestra, and I had a recording of the show but I wanted to make a new track out of pieces of it, which became "Manufactured Memories" I did the recording in Amsterdam and had the engineers speaking Dutch about cosmic shit, and then came out with the whole Sun Ra, Miles thing, you know, that tradition"

Craig is referring to the track's exuberant shout out to the guiding spirits of Sun Ra, Miles Davis, Art Blakey and John Coltrane, inspiring what he describes on the track as *"Beats from beyond and melodies from above"* OK But what does it mean?

"Future Beats Concepts that are beyond normal perceptions of pop music and regular rudimentary music which you hear all the time on the radio"

The confidence evident in the music on *Programmed* stands in sharp contrast to the fumbled uncertainties of the times Techno's sturdy futurism may not be able to sustain itself if the millennium bug brings down the world's power supplies How gritty and dystopian a message is that? As a wry comment on the failure of telecommunication systems to actually communicate with each other, the album opens with "Wrong Number", featuring an unusually affectionate anonymous message mistakenly left on Carl Craig's answering machine one night The impression is of a lonely individual so completely routed by technology that he doesn't even know he's lost anymore With the new millennium threatening the first major electronic crisis in human history, does Carl Craig know where he's going to be at 23 59 on 31 December 1999?

"I really have no clue yet" he responds "I think the safest place is always at home, you know, just in case there's going to be any major power cuts or anything I would not want to be right in the middle of the crowd at a 15,DDD person party, being stampeded At least, if people start throwing rocks through the window or something, I know where home is I know where I am But with my luck, I'll probably be in an elevator in a hotel somewhere"

Does the future worry him?

"I've always had this kind of 'Bizarro World' feeling that by being involved in what I'm doing, you know, playing parties and being in the studio and stuff, there's a very large possibility that I could go deaf," he says "It's the same thing with electricity There's a very large possibility that we may not have electricity at some point and that then we'll stagnate You know, it's not like it's 1999 and a half or something We're going into a new millennium, and it could be Judgment Day, and it could mean going back to archaic times where we have no technology anymore Anything might happen But having a dominant idea of what happened musically is great I want to be very sure of the last step I make this century, rather than just be testing the ground" □ *The vinyl version of Innerzone Orchestra's* Programmed *is out this month on Talkin Loud, the CD follows in August*

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SQUAREPUSHER PRESENTS MAXIMUM PRIEST E.P.

The **Fender Rhodes electric piano** was the instrument that facilitated the revolutionary electric jazz of Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea. 30 years on, musicians still yearn after its future-perfect sound. Here, producer Kirk Degiorgio pays tribute to a design classic

the then & now sound

The Fender Rhodes Stage 88

PHOTO OUTLINE

Is the Fender Rhodes electric piano the greatest instrument ever invented? Either way, in the 1960s, the malleable, crystalline sound of this most mythologised of keyboard instruments exerted a gravitational pull on a generation of musicians working in the vanguard of the new jazz, and so precipitated a seismic shift in the history of black music

Only complex psychoacoustics can explain why the Rhodes sounds so captivating when captured by up to five microphones positioned in front of the rotating horns of a Leslie speaker cabinet. But in the late 1960s, for the likes of Joe Zawinul, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, musicians whose work with Miles Davis would push the cumbersome tools of acoustic jazz to their limits, the Rhodes was a stargate through which they could access new galaxies of sound, texture and tone-colour Three decades on, and the sound of the Rhodes (actual or synthesized) has become a lodestone for advanced musical thought, an instant signifier that connects a new generation of musicians and producers working in Techno, HipHop and drum 'n' bass with the mythic-traditions of progressive black music Which is as it should be although the Fender Rhodes has been deployed by musicians as diverse as Harold Budd and Brian Auger, it has been put to most devastating use in the hypertensile arenas of electric jazz

Jazz-lore states that the electric piano first appeared on a major commercial release when Joe Zawinul used a Wurlitzer model on Cannonball Adderley's 1967 recording of "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" However, Sun Ra used a Wurlitzer on many of the sessions he recorded in the mid-50s at Chicago's RCA studio, and both the Wurlitzer and Fender Rhodes were used prior to 1967 on a number of lesser-known jazz and R&B releases Yet the session that produced "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" marks a convenient starting point for electric jazz, as it provided the inspiration for Miles Davis to introduce a Wurlitzer for Herbie Hancock to use on the "Water On the Pond" session in December 1967 This was the beginning of the electrification of Miles's music, a transformation sparked in the circuits of the massed keyboard banks utilised by Zawinul, Hancock and Corea the following year during the sessions that produced the *In A Silent Way* album

The defining moment of electric jazz occurs during the three bar Rhodes sequence that announces the abruptly edited section of "Its About That Time" This amazing session featured Zawinul, Hancock and Corea playing various combinations of organ, Fender Rhodes and Wurlitzer electric pianos The mood established by the group is sublime In the absence of any formally written horn lines, little riffs and repeated phrases are fired off by the various keyboards and interspersed with a repeating three-note bass wiggle It all gels when Dave Holland lays down a two-bar bassline which is doubled at various points by one or more of the keyboards The tension builds until released by a

stunning trumpet solo Miles had experimented with the doubling of bass figures with guitar and Rhodes after hearing Sly & The Family Stone, and according to Ian Carr's biography he reckoned his three pianists sounded "like a full orchestra" True, but an orchestra made up of electronically-enhanced cyborgs fronted by a trumpet-wielding magus in a dashiki

The Fender Rhodes electric piano began its evolution in the 1940s when Harold Rhodes noted the excellent tones he could get by striking various lengths of aluminium pipe He continued to develop his ideas towards the creation of a mass-produced, portable electric piano which would sound via a series of hammers striking steel rods In the late 50s, and facing competition from an alternative design by the Wurlitzer company, Rhodes teamed up with instrument manufacturer Leo Fender to work on perfecting the Fender Rhodes design Fender was bought out by CBS in 1965, but the company continued to support Rhodes, and later that year, the Fender Rhodes Suitcase 73 went into production (The model was so named because it had 73 keys, as well as a 50 watt amplifier with built in speaker, and a mono vibrato control)

In the late 60s, the label most associated with electric jazz crossover was Blue Note But the first Blue Note session to feature an electric piano didn't occur until April 1969, when Duke Pearson used one for his *How Insensitive* album A week later Herbie Hancock played an electric piano in the ensemble sections of his Duke Pearson produced album, *The Prisoner* Yet due to the label's hectic release schedule, the first Blue Note *release* to feature an electric keyboard was Donald Byrd's modal inspired *Fancy Free* Again, Duke Pearson was the pianist. "He's so gassed with the sound, he's buying one," wrote Byrd in the sleevenotes, adding "It's appeal to me is like that of a celeste in an orchestra"

The comparison between the celeste and the Rhodes is a common one The Rhodes's sound has often been described as 'silvery', 'water-like', 'crystal-like' (between 1967-69, Rhodes even manufactured a three octave version called the Fender Rhodes Celeste) But in the late 60s, it was described with even more regularity as the 'now' or 'modern' sound, reflecting the influence electronic instruments were beginning to have on jazz at the time

Towards the end of the decade, most jazz pianists switched to the electric piano, but a few, such as McCoy Tyner, refused to abandon the acoustic piano, complaining that the electric models lacked individuality The sleevenotes to many albums featuring electric piano often made an over-defensive justification for its usage, or denied accusations of 'sell-out', indicating that the instrument was perceived by some jazz purists as a 'gimmick' or 'commercial' sound In the early 70s, Hal Galper recorded a number of albums for the Mainstream label, extracting a unique, modulated, organ-like tone from the Rhodes But after declaring his need to get back to the acoustic piano, he reputedly threw his Rhodes into the Hudson River and watched it sink.

This kind of criticism of the Rhodes was summarised by Kenny Barron in the sleevenotes to his 1975 album *Lucifer* "You can't really recognise anybody on the electric piano, it's very difficult to control, as far as touch is concerned What it boils down to is that everyone sounds good on electric piano" What this attitude failed to grasp, however, was how the Rhodes could act as a facilitator of advanced musical techniques

Working with his post-Miles group Return To Forever, Chick Corea favoured a sparsely-produced small group sound that highlighted the Rhodes's ability to create an intense atmosphere On an acoustic piano, Corea's use of complex chords, lightning fast runs and the kind of repetitive loop-like bass figures that he had begun to explore on Pete LaRoca's *Turkish Woman At The Bath* album, might have sound cluttered and oppressive,

On the Rhodes: Chick Corea. Right: Herbie Hancock

filtered through a Rhodes, however, Corea's music seems to sparkle with colours

The electric piano may have dictated the action and articulation more than the pianist's technique, but those musicians who embraced the Rhodes and Wurlitzer as part of a new electronic soundscape forged their own individual style by processing the sound and making modifications to the pianos' mechanisms Look closely at studio pictures from the early 70s and you'll often see a lidless Rhodes with an array of outboard gear and effects pedals attached via audio cables to its pre-amp section One particular photograph, taken circa 1971-2 and reproduced in *The Wire* 174, shows Herbie Hancock's Rhodes with its lid removed and a host of screwdrivers resting inside

The output of the Rhodes could be altered in many ways The sound is created by a series of hammers hitting metal tines which then resonate Various pick-ups feed the resulting tones to the pre-amp section which can then be fed to other effects boxes or amplifiers On early models, the hammers were felt-tipped, giving a mellow tone The neoprene tips that were introduced in 1971 were much harder and were graded across the keyboard harder tips for the higher octaves, softer for the bass notes Replacing the standard tips was a typical modification that could result in an overly bright, crystal-like tone if a very hard material was used The sharpness of the attack could be altered by pushing the tines closer to the pick-ups, while changing the angle of the resonating tines would emphasise certain harmonics and produce strange overtones

Certainly Sun Ra had no trouble showing his individualism on the Rhodes, getting a warped, celeste-like tone, due in part to the way he recorded it as much as his technique Throughout the 1978 album *Languidity* (Philly Jazz), he created ethereal worlds full of alien presence, despite the dissonance in his playing

During the 70s, companies such as Dyna-My-Piano specialised in Rhodes modifications, and serious Rhodes users would install additional levers to alter the action, or introduce extra pre-amp sections, which split the output into bass and treble, each output could then be individually processed and EQ'd to create an extremely complex sound Apparently, George Duke had *three* outputs on his plexi-glass edition Rhodes

In 1971 the basic vibrato was upgraded to stereo with a pair of 50 watt speakers Yet it was the combination of the Rhodes and a rotating Leslie speaker cabinet that produced the 'classic' electric piano sound, best exemplified by the tones and textures generated by Lonnie Liston Smith on a sequence of albums that began with his contribution to Pharoah Sanders's 1971 Impulse! release *Thembi*, and continued through his own records for the Flying Dutchman label, which included the Pharoah-esque *Astral Travelling* and classics of mid-70s jazz funk such as *Expansions* and *Visions Of A New World* Smith recorded the Rhodes through a rotating Leslie speaker with mild distortion, generating a 'trippy', phased sound

PHOTOS CHICK COREA VAL WILMER HERBIE HANCOCK GEMS/REDFERNS

Sun Ra. Right: George Duke

Making full use of the Rhodes's unusually long sustain, he created hi-tech chordal envelopes to surround sections of organic World percussion instruments. This warm and hugely influential sound (Photek sampled the Pharoah Sanders version of Smith's "Astral Travelling" on his "Rings Around Saturn" single) was particularly effective on ballad-tempo tracks, where the huge, sustaining chords created a meditative atmosphere.

The earliest suitcase models of the Rhodes were incredibly heavy due to their built in amplifiers (weight-wise, the amp was the equivalent of the block of concrete in a washing machine). In 1970 a stage version, with either 73 or 88 keys, was introduced that did away with the amplifier section. The new models also came with screw-in legs and an adjustable sustain pedal, making them portable if somewhat fiddly to set up. In 1972 the tone-bar was changed to reduce unwanted overtones, resulting in a cleaner sound. The following year an effects loop was built-in, reflecting the popularity of external processing of the Rhodes output.

Many pianists — Herbie Hancock, in particular — became attracted to the electric piano's ability to 'bend notes' when used in conjunction with a vari-speed tape-delay unit such as Maestro's Echoplex, an effect obtained by feeding the output of the Rhodes into the Echoplex and manually slowing the tape speed using a lever. This effect is captured perfectly by Hancock during his introductions to Bennie Maupin's *Jewel In The Lotus* (ECM) and Norman Connors's *Revelation* (Buddha), both released in 1974.

The same year, the Fender Rhodes company decided to make a promotional flexidisc highlighting their different models along with various effects, and they hired Herbie Hancock to demonstrate and explain each device. (The disc also features a segment of Hancock's lost soundtrack to the banned blaxploitation movie, *The Spook Who Sat Behind The Door*.) "Ostinato", the opening track on *Mwandishi*, the second release by Hancock's Sextet after it had signed to Warner Bros in 1969, is a great example of his ingenious use of the Echoplex to shape and contort the Rhodes's tones. "Water Torture", from 1972's *Crossings*, featured even more twisted Rhodes harmonics as Herbie played with artificial reverberation settings to alter perceptions of time and space. His experiments with the Rhodes reached a peak, however, on what would turn out to be his Sextet's last album, *Sextant*.

Above all, *Sextant* is an album of contrasts. Complex arrangements grow out of seemingly simple funk/rock vamps, and 'exotic' percussion instruments combine with extra-terrestrial synth textures. *Sextant* is still one of the most futuristic sounding albums ever, yet it was almost completely rejected by a bewildered record-buying audience on its release in 1973. The side-long "Hornets" not only features some of Herbie's most abstract solo work — incorporating fuzz-wah, Echoplex and reverb — but also sees him transforming the Rhodes into a stabbing, percussive rhythm-device which intertwines with the harsher sounding riffs of the overdubbed clavinet.

One of the most significant processing techniques applied to the Rhodes was the use of a Ring Modulator to create bell-like timbres or polytonal effects. (A Ring Modulator is a simple electronic device that takes an incoming 'carrier' signal and mixes it with an internal/external oscillator frequency. The Modulator then outputs both the sum and difference of the two frequencies, resulting in curious, atonal sounds.) Dedicated Ring Modulators were previously only available on large modular synthesisers such as the ARP 2500, that is until the Maestro company produced a more portable version perfectly suited for stage use. In the early 70s, George Duke used an extreme Modulator effect together with an Echoplex to create bell-like Rhodes percussion solos on a series of albums he recorded for the MPS label. Fresh out of Frank Zappa's Mothers Of Invention, Duke played electric piano with various analogue synths, sometimes without other accompaniment, as on "North Beach", a moody, ambient piece included on the 1974 *Faces In Reflection* album, that ranges from quiet, mysterious Rhodes sections to wailing Echoplexed synth effects and overdubbed Wurlitzer freak-outs. Duke's use of electronics as rhythmic elements is effective and funky, while the heavy processing merges the sounds so that the Rhodes and Wurlitzer become abstract colours behind the synth and electric guitar-like sections.

To meet the rising demand for Rhodes add-ons, a number of companies emerged in the early 70s specialising in manufacturing musical devices that keyboardists used to further expand the range of sounds not possible with the acoustic piano. Despite the acknowledged limitations of the electric piano's action, it allowed pianists to be at the forefront of music technology. With the electric piano in mind, Bode, Countryman, Maestro, Mutron and others created various phase and frequency shifters, filter boxes and octave dividers. New portable synthesizers such as the MiniMoog and ARP 2600 also included input stages which could take a Rhodes signal, allowing the Rhodes sound to be shaped by the synthesizers' on-board features.

Most commonly, effects boxes originally intended for the electric guitar were also used heavily with the Rhodes. Miles Davis's live albums from the early 70s are swamped with fuzz-wah'd electric pianos. The wah-wah pedal enabled the electric pianist to imitate the new chicken-scratch rhythm techniques of guitarists such as Phelps Collins, Hearlon Martin and Jimmy Nolen from James Brown's groups. Listen to Roland Haynes's 1975 *2nd Wave* album (Black Jazz), which features dual electric pianists yet sounds like a Rhodes/electric guitar combination due to the use of wah-wah.

By 1975 the Fender Rhodes was now just the 'Rhodes', reflecting the fact that it was mainly the work of one man. As the decade wore on, bigger amplifiers were added, and finally in 1978, lighter, all-plastic hammers were introduced to create an easier, faster action. In 1979 the Mark II model was introduced. It had a better action than the Mark I, improved tone and pre-amp controls, and a flat top to make keyboard stacking easier. But by this stage, much of the electronic processing that had galvanised early 70s jazz had been abandoned, and the Rhodes become more associated with the kind of jazz funk-lite of musicians such as Rodney Franklin, Bob James and Joe Sample.

Inevitably, in the 1980s the Rhodes eventually gave way to digital equivalents, but its comeback in recent years demonstrates how difficult it has been to capture its magical sound via digital technology. It took me a long time to find a Mark I Stage 73 with a good action, full set of original legs and sustain pedal — and even then I've had to get it balanced and tuned to great cost. Spare parts are not cheap, it takes up a lot of room, and it has the original curved lid so I have to be careful putting other keyboards on top. Ask 4 Hero's Dego McFarlane how he used to get his Stage 88 model in and out of his loft-based studio. But I doubt he would swap his Rhodes for a set of samples, and neither would I.

PHOTOS: SUN RA: VAL WILMER; GEORGE DUKE: ANDREW PUTLER/REDFERNS

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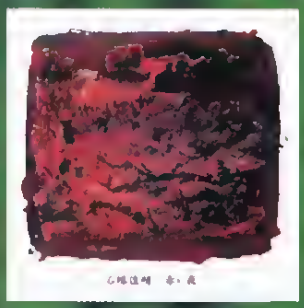

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Otomo Yoshihide is the hardest working man in the noise business. Sometimes it feels like you can't move for the number of souvenir discs documenting his bewildering sequence of one-night stands with exuberant noisemakers, ecstatic jazzers and eccentric free players the world over. I first saw him in March 1995, when he made his London debut at the LMC's New Auras series in an explosive duet with the hyperactive Boredoms singer Yamatsuka Eye. Employing turntables, MiniDisc, CD player and a ramshackle homemade guitar, Otomo improvised flash floods of manipulated sound that teased, tickled, tossed and drowned the otherworldly utterances spat out by Eye, who hurled himself around the stage like a man possessed. Coming on like a bun fight amid crashing cars, they caused the normally restrained patrons of London's Purcell Room to break into cheering and whistling after every piece — some of them lasting all of five seconds.

Emerging in the mid-80s from the Japanese free jazz and improvised music scene, Otomo founded the group Ground Zero as a means of melding improvisation with other Japanese traditions of noise and rock. A virtuoso at mixing and collaging, he unites within himself strands of music previously kept apart, or even at factional loggerheads with each other. Ground Zero dissolved in 1997. By that time, Otomo had become a brilliant turntablist improvisor, and his group had stunned audiences around the world with their seismic performances, powered by two drummers, two guitarists and two samplers. Their recordings are probably the finest incorporation of sampling into rock music so far. However, the contrast with Otomo's current work is dramatic. Exploring areas beyond noise and improvisation, he has abandoned his 20 kilo touring box of vinyl albums in favour of a bare turntable and mixing desk. Likewise, fellow former Ground Zero member Sachiko M, Otomo's partner and regular collaborator, has emptied her sampler of all samples, leaving little more than the pure sinewaves built into the machine. In their joint projects ISO and Filament, the two have moved as far as possible, for the present at least, from turntablism and its entertaining showmanship, to an almost Zen-like exploration of electronic sound.

music without

Since dissolving his formidable noise group Ground Zero, **Otomo Yoshihide** has forsaken turntablist

This music may be austere, but it can be just as radical and provocative as anything in Otomo's past. Last year a Filament performance in New York tempted *Village Voice* critic Ernie Glam to pull the plugs on the group. Under the headline "Wailing Hounds Of Hell", Glam reported: "The tortured screeching stunned (and possibly hearing-damaged) the crowd. Then panic set in. Wincing and looking down, I noticed my hand resting next to a power strip that electrified some of Filament's equipment. My pinkie involuntarily twitched towards the flickering off-switch. Then there was silence."

In the flesh, on a sunny London afternoon, Otomo looks unlikely to goad anyone through the gates of hell. Easygoing and modest to a fault, he is slightly stocky, with thick and spiky hair, like an amiable rugby player with a trick up his sleeve. Meeting Japanese avant garde musicians can be shocking exactly because of their overwhelming normality — imagine a samurai warrior offering you a crisp. Or sometimes the Japanese reluctance to express personal opinions comes across

memory

pyrotechnics for a Zen-like approach to sound. Words: Clive Bell. Photography: Eva Vermandel

like they have almost nothing to say. Fortunately, Otomo is happy thinking aloud about what lies behind his music, and has a keen sense of its history. I was curious to hear what kind of parents such an extreme sound artist might have.

"My mother was a big jazz fan, and she loved to dance," says Otomo. "I think she was a bad girl when she was young. I was born in Yokohama, where there was a military base camp during the American occupation. So they had a jazz club and my mother grew up dancing to swing jazz."

My mother was busy doing the same, dancing with American airmen in Ilford during World War Two, I interject. "So your father is American?" responds Otomo. No, no, I clarify, it was only dancing.

Ah, he nods, continuing. "My father was an electrical engineer, designing TVs and radios for a small company near Tokyo. Around 1967 we moved to Fukushima in northern Japan. My father built his own TV and audio system. So when I was a teenager I could already build a radio — I never studied it, I just knew. I had a reel to reel tape recorder, and used to compile tapes from radio broadcasts. Then I discovered contemporary electronic music and I started to play around with the tape recorder.

"A lot of rock music was using tape techniques, like The Beatles' 'Revolution No 9', or King Crimson. Once a week a contemporary music corner on FM radio used to play a lot of electronic music, like Pierre Schaeffer or Kosugi Takehisa [violinist and founder of the guerrilla rock group Taj Mahal Travellers]. I got a lot of influence from this station. I tried things out myself, but not so seriously. On the other hand I was in a school rock 'n' roll band, on guitar and sometimes bass. Only a handful of us listened to contemporary music. In early 70s Japan, King Crimson was really underground music. Most people listened to Japanese pop, 'kayohkyoku', which was bigger than The Beatles or Simon & Garfunkel. Of course I had posters of Japanese girl bands in my room too. Whenever I spoke about music I would say that I liked free jazz or Pierre Schaeffer; actually I loved all the pop stuff too, but I would never have admitted it."

An image forms of the teenage Otomo, listening to musique concrete beneath a giant colour poster of The Candies or teen idol Momoe Yamaguchi. But the place where serious-minded Japanese youth used to go to hear jazz or to read political magazines was the specialised coffee house called the 'jazz kissa' (kissaten means cafe).

"When I was 16 I started going to jazz kissa," expands Otomo. "Before that it was too scary, it was a secret adult world. The coffee was just an excuse, the main things were the jazz and the audio system. A small room, and these huge JBL speakers. Every cafe owner was so proud of his audio system. No one spoke, they just listened."

The jazz kissa was indeed a unique Japanese institution. I was once ticked off in a Tokyo jazz kissa for holding a conversation. Please desist from talking, I was asked politely. The jazz records were listed in leather-bound albums, from which you could make an LP request along with your drink. The music was played loud to a clientele slumped in armchairs, reading manga comics. A night down your local, dimly lit jazz kissa was an intense experience.

"There are now only a couple of these places left in Tokyo," says Otomo. "They were really a kind of 70s fever in Japan. But it was a poorer country then, and everyone was hungry for art and serious music. In the 80s it became so much easier to get information about music. Suddenly everyone was wearing a personal stereo. Before that most young people had no audio system.

"You would go to the jazz kissa to hear Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, sometimes even Derek Bailey and Evan Parker. But what had the most impact was live music. Sometimes the kissa would organise a concert. They had no money and the space was tiny, so they would book Japanese musicians to play solo. And a solo can be more abstract and extreme than a band. The first real impact on me was Kaoru Abe, playing a solo sax concert in Fukushima. I could hardly understand it, but there was something there. It was similar to early punk, very high energy, and looked like total anarchy."

Kaoru Abe, who died of a drug overdose in 1978, was one of the charismatic legends of Japanese free jazz. He played sax in a wild and physical style, but it was the storms of feedback he sometimes unleashed on electric guitar that directly inspired the young Otomo to create free music. Following his yen for noise, he gravitated towards major Japanese free guitarist Masayuki 'Jojo' Takayanagi. Well known in the 50s and

60s as a cool-jazz guitarist, by the 70s he was, in Otomo's words, "the guitarist who played the loudest volume and noisiest feedback in Japan" Yet Takayanagi maintained a parallel career with a Lennie Tristano-style jazz group until his death, ten years ago

Otomo recalls, "I first encountered Takayanagi through his magazine articles He was one of the most extreme writers, very philosophical but always angry He was angry about society and commercial music, and very critical of American jazz"

Was there any music he approved of? Otomo has to think about that one "Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, the Incus stuff," he eventually replies "I met Takayanagi around 1980 and became part of his circle I had moved to Tokyo in 1979, and for a year I was completely lost I went to a lot of live music clubs, but I was always disappointed I was studying ethnomusicology, and I did research into two subjects the music of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and Japanese pop songs during the Second World War For a while I couldn't decide whether to be a musician or an academic But when I started going to Takayanagi for guitar lessons, I realised he was like a religious master He had a strong gravity and I was drawn into his orbit I was a terrible student I had no interest in practising scales, but I was always interested in talking to Takayanagi about the ideas of free jazz All the other students wanted to be jazz guitarists Takayanagi had a serious liver disease He was in hospital for a year, and when he came out he couldn't walk He chose me to be his driver, so for a few years I was like a member of his family"

The guitarist Akira Iijima, who died in his forties a few years ago, was another member of Takayanagi's guitar playing circle If the lazy Otomo was bottom of the class, Iijima was the star student, and a member of Takayanagi's New Direction Unit, the group which performed at the 1975 Moers Jazz Festival — the only time Takayanagi performed outside Japan Later, Iijima, a thoughtful, delicate acoustic improvisor, contributed a track to Fred Frith's third *Guitar Solos* compilation Frith, whose 1985 *Welcome To Dreamland* compilation was an early, influential collection of Japanese noise music, was also a pivotal figure for Takayanagi's more wayward apprentice Otomo

"I saw Fred Frith play solo in Japan around 1980 He played tabletop guitar, ordinary guitar and violin Before that I had only seen improvisation coming from jazz, but Fred was coming from the rock side In the mid-80s I built my homemade guitar — I saw what Fred Frith was doing, and I had helped Takayanagi to build some electronic equipment Besides, my old guitar was broken and I had no money"

At some point in the mid-80s, Otomo decided to make the painful break from Takayanagi, who had become something of a father figure to him Before long he encountered two more major musical influences The first was Japanese-Brazilian samba, a somewhat bizarre sounding hybrid, until you realise that Brazil has a large Japanese population, encouraged to emigrate there as farmers at the beginning of the century

In the 1980s, with Japan's bubble economy swelling apace, many Japanese Brazilians returned home They might have looked Japanese, but many could neither read the language nor crack Japan's intricate social codes Even so, they made an impact on a Japanese society already growing in self-confidence Otomo says, "I met a Brazilian percussionist, and I went to his amateur percussion circle every Sunday It was really fun Before that I never had fun with music, it was always very serious The Brazilian idea is completely different The rhythm system is so deep, and the groove is so magical This was one factor that helped me find my new thinking The other was John Zorn

"Zorn came to Japan in the mid-80s and more or less lived in Tokyo He spoke Japanese perfectly He was not like a foreign musician, he was a Tokyo musician He organised a lot of extremely interesting concerts Before that the concerts were separated into free jazz, noise or rock, but Zorn brought noise musicians together with contemporary players, and really mixed things up Sometimes it didn't work at all, but I loved his positive way of thinking He organised a lot of sessions and performances of his Game Pieces"

At first Otomo was in the audience, but it wasn't long before he was up there onstage participating in Zorn-like musical miscegenations "I had been working with several small tape recorders and a mixer," he explains "But the tape recorders were so slow to find the particular sound that you wanted I tried new things like using a lot of tape loops, but it was still slow Then around 1983 I saw pictures of reggae and HipHop DJs playing turntables, and I read an article about Christian Marclay making avant garde music on turntables It was impossible to find Marclay's records, but I thought, well that's a good idea Finally in 1985 I saw Christian Marclay perform, and it sounded completely different to how I expected"

Otomo formed Ground Zero in the early 90s to explore his idea of "defining an energetic point" He was after an extremely high energy group music which featured sampling, as evidenced by the group's stunning self-titled debut album released in 1992 by Hoppy Kamiyama's God Mountain label On that album, as well as subsequent releases such as *Null And Void*, released in 1995 on John Zorn's Tzadik imprint, you can hear Otomo's turntables and sampler battling it out with each other over a maelstrom created by up to two rhythm sections alongside guitarists, saxophones and maybe a shamisen lute Ground Zero played its final concert at the 1997 LMC Festival Well, there was an undeniable aura of finality about this deafening monster of a performance, which was mixed down by the notorious Japanese noisecore engineer Yoshiaki Kondo But faster than you can say Frank Sinatra, Otomo brought the group out of retirement for a second farewell performance in Japan, a recording of which has just been released as *Last Concert* on Sachiko M's Amoebic label Another key example of their recorded work is *Revolutionary Peking Opera*, a 40 minute resampled remix of *Peking Oper* (1984) by Heiner Goebbels and Alfred 23 Harth, which was itself a sampled rendition of a 1960s Chinese opera The way Goebbels and Harth worked the Chinese material deeply impressed Otomo, who became determined to push the process even further The Ground Zero version is a riotous fairground booth of distorting mirrors, in which the Maoist heroics of the original work are repeatedly detonated and subverted

"I had studied the history of this music in China," remarks Otomo, "but Goebbels and Harth were trying to change the history I was so shocked by the way they changed a piece that was originally written by a serious revolutionary composer"

Like Otomo's soundtrack to Tian Zhuang Zhuang's film *The Blue Kite*, which is set in China during the 1950s and 60s, the piece seems to be dealing with the disappointment and disillusion that sets in after revolution "In the 60s and 70s a lot of people trusted the Cultural Revolution in China," says Otomo, "but after it failed the revolution took another course Youth culture is something like this, they always want new things, but then they end up as normal adults After revolution comes the real world Revolution is not the real world, it's like a dream, or a dream of art, but reality is always different"

Otomo has undertaken other similar projects with sampling composers Carl Stone and Bob Ostertag, in which a piece is passed back and forth, resampled and reworked to create a metamorphosing music that is maybe never finished

"For me in the mid-90s the sampling idea was really like a virus," explains Otomo, whose 1993 solo release, *The Night Before The Death Of The Sampling Virus* (Extreme), combined excerpts from TV and radio broadcasts with contributions from vocalists Tenko and Yamatsuka Eye into an oblique commentary on Japanese society "The virus always changes the information and is influenced by it," he continues "I'm also interested in the identity of the virus itself It never exists independently, it has to be in the blood The virus is not me, but there's a strange border between the virus and

people, always influencing each other And if I sample someone's music, then it becomes difficult to say who made this music I really don't trust the Western composer system Haydn made a piece on paper, but the performer is always the orchestra and the conductor, and each performance is different So whose music is this?"

Parallel to Ground Zero, Otomo has performed frequently as a soloist or guest improvisor working turntables and CD players A memorable concert at London's ICA in May 1996 featured a series of manic battles, many of them hilarious, between Otomo and British improvisors such as Steve Noble and Steve Beresford But the moment of revelation was his closing, exquisitely beautiful 12 minute duet with the Tuvan singer Sainkho Namchylak

A new duo album recorded with the Quebecois turntablist Martin Tetreault and released on the Canadian Dame/Ambiances Magnetique label concludes this 'showmanship' period of Otomo's cut-and-paste turntablism Over 21 short tracks, recorded in Canada in 1997, he and Tetreault deploy turntables less as sources of postmodern collage, and more as machines for generating texture or mysterious percussion Hardly any human intervention is audible as each track develops a glistening vinyl dream, yet the sense of agreement between the two musicians is intense

"In the last two years my direction has really changed Martin Tetreault has also been thinking along the same lines In the early 90s he developed a great technique for turntable collage Now he has almost abandoned this and is focusing on the sound of the cartridge itself This made a big impression on me I worked with him for ten days and we talked together every night about new ways of making music This was to be my next big turning point"

The importance of his head-turning discussions with Tetreault is evident in Otomo's new groups, ISO and Filament They're not Otomo vehicles, he's quick to point out, but democratically run units What they do have in common is that neither of them uses conventional instruments ISO, standing both for In Side Out and Isochromatic Sound Organisation, adds the percussionist Ichiraku Yoshimitsu to the Filament duo of Otomo and Sachiko M In his review of three recent ISO albums in *The Wire* 183, Douglas Wolk spoke of the trio's self-titled album on the UK Alcohol label as "the deepest and most mysterious of the three feasting insect noises disorienting slowness, sinewaves fluttering like strobe lights"

Improvised and recorded in London, Otomo claims *ISO* is one of his best records I ask for his view on the current state of improvised music "Free improvisation over the last ten years has settled into a horizontal way, making a linear structure through improvisation, so that it becomes like composition This applies to me too But early improvisation, for example early Derek Bailey, wasn't like that It had more of a vertical structure, it didn't move Just play and forget about it, play and forget"

The Filament duo is also engaged in a restrained and painstaking probing of sound On the new *Filament 2* album, Otomo and Sachiko are joined by percussionist Gunter Muller (the CD is released by Muller's For 4 Ears label) By the final track the machines are howling like coyotes in the electronic desert, with tongue-flickering lizards scribbling across the sand

Working samplers devoid of samples and turntables without records to create a strange post-apocalyptic landscape, Filament is something like a negative image of Otomo's previous work He and Sachiko are presently making music without memory, a music emptied of instrumental timbre and conventional shape — the exact opposite of the loaded memory musics of Otomo's earlier turntablist/samplist phases What prompted the change of focus?

"First, I want to make a much clearer focusing in my music," he answers "Before I was mixing a lot of information together, but now the real world is just like that, especially in Japan People are barely surviving in a sea of too much information In the 80s this mixture was new for me but now it's the same as reality, there's no critique, no distance And the structure of this mixture style became just like advertising on the subway, just one poster after another A lot of sampling music is like that Anyone can sample cheaply and easily now So now I want to focus, to find a whole world in tiny things

"The basic idea behind Filament comes from Sachiko," he continues "She was rather frustrated in Ground Zero All the other members were professional musicians with plenty of technique, and they just loved to play They were always focused on technique, how to make a rhythm or a structure But Sachiko came from a different angle She always thought about listening and how to make the sound Her ideas about listening have had a big influence on me Maybe this is similar to the thinking of Jim O'Rourke or the Mego people in Vienna

"Electronic music is not physical, there's no body memory The sampler looks physical when you press the button, but the finger has no memory The memory is inside the sampler, a kind of fake memory After Ground Zero I couldn't do anything, I just read manga for three months Then I tried to start from just listening If there's no memory of music, then what do the sampler and turntable have? So we started from the sinewave because this is the most simple sound Sachiko and I tried playing sinewaves together — if you play a 40 kHz sinewave and I play 41 kHz it makes a moving beat It's not a physical groove, but more like we are conducting a scientific experiment together Then we tried, say, 10 kHz and 10 0001 kHz In the headphones nothing happens, but in the speakers there's a lot of movement And inside a church "

Filament's London performance this May was staged in the ample and rich acoustic of St John's Church in Waterloo People familiar with their CDs commented on how the large space gave a new dimension to the music, and Otomo described the show as one of his most satisfying to date

What's more, hardly anyone walked out of Filament during that night If that's not a first for Otomo — the volume levels at Ground Zero's 1997 LMC concert were notoriously high — it's unusual enough to be remarked on It reminds me of the two bones I have to pick with Otomo One is the subject of pain and the extreme discomfort his music causes some listeners "For me, Filament connects with noise music, though Sachiko doesn't agree," he says "Of course it's painful, but pain is one form of expressing feelings We don't play much longer than 40 minutes, otherwise my ears would be completely broken If someone hates it, please just leave"

My other gripe is about electronic sound pollution Isn't the urban environment already awash in superfluous electronic sound, from piercing bleeps in subway elevators to car alarms? "That's right," he replies "For me it's similar to noise music in the 80s Tokyo was already extremely noisy, but I wanted to make music that was even more noisy When I listen to 80s noise music now, it's like an orchestra There are so many elements, it's just beautiful! It doesn't sound like noise now I'm still looking for the border between noise and music Maybe I'm a masochist, but I'm really interested in the border of real noise, not just a noise style It can happen with sampling too if you play an Elvis Presley sample in the middle of some Mozart, then the Elvis is immediately noise"

Face it, the world's a noisy place, and not all the racket is man-made "I'm not interested in simulating the sound of the city," asserts Otomo "I listen to it; sometimes it's interesting and other times I hate it because it's so noisy, but then I have to live with it In nature too there are very loud sounds Some people can't stand those Japanese crickets called 'semi' They're amazingly loud, they're noisier than Merzbow, but to Japanese people they just create a good summery feeling Sometimes Western people have a problem with such a violent noise But nature is not just peaceful The most scary sound for me is the strong bass sound you get just before an earthquake I'm always so scared of this, especially in Tokyo In Fukushima in 1978 there was a fairly big earthquake I was in a jazz cafe Everyone panicked, and all the speakers fell on top of me An earthquake is the most dangerous and extreme noise music ever" □

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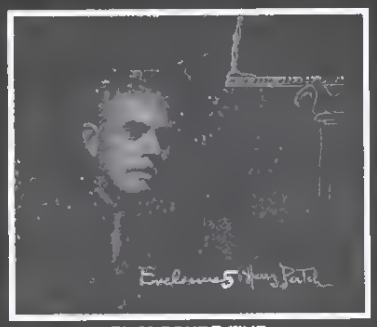

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Steppenwolf

fables of the

Undercurrents #7: in the latest in our series uncovering the how rock 'n' roll's face was changed forever when the race to

One May evening in 1967 at San Francisco's Matrix club, Steppenwolf's bass player Nick St Nicholas got up on stage, plugged his guitar into an amplifier and Echo-lite unit and proceeded to experiment. Urged on by St Nicholas's freeform freak out, the rest of the group mounted the stage, picked up their instruments and joined in. "Before we knew it we were more or less improvising," reflected the group's leader John Kay two years after the event, "jamming, squeezing and shaping a musical thing which lasted for 20 minutes and broke finally into "The Pusher", which astounded us and the audience at how well it came off." Kay attributed this early improvisational rendering of what was to become one of Steppenwolf's most popular songs to a range of influences, from the electroacoustic compositions of Edgard Varese to "the French semi-electronic symphonic school of music".

That a biker-favoured outfit like Steppenwolf were willing to push their primal brand of rock 'n' roll towards the more academic ideals of experimental music and musique concrete adds a hidden dimension to the lyrics of their greatest hit: musically, they really were (re)born to be wild.

"We did "The Pusher" every night and the intro part just kind of evolved as a time for us to do whatever we wanted," remembers drummer Jerry Edmonton. "People started talking about the band after that. "The Pusher" got people saying, 'There's this band from Canada and they're way out there'."

As with countless other 60s groups, the main ingredient that made Steppenwolf sound so out there was lysergic acid diethylamide, the hallucinogenic potion that had seeped out of the US government's own secret laboratories. Once it hit the streets via the proselytising efforts of Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey, it inadvertently became the creative tool for a generation hellbent on opening up heaven, while bringing the establishment crashing down around them. The other ingredient was, of course, the music itself, which — along with attitudes towards sex, fashion, art and the ongoing Vietnam war — was ripe for transformation.

Rock music and the academy have rarely had anything useful to say to each other, either before or after the 60s, and it would be too glib to attribute the dialogue going on between them to the special openness that characterised that purportedly class-free decade. Besides, the academy had begun its end of the conversation way back at the beginning of modernism, which itself was breach-birthed at the turn of the century during the cataclysm of the Industrial Revolution. On one level, modernism was an artistic response to the deepening sense of alienation that resulted from the rapid industrialisation of town and country, and of work and leisure. Within academic music, it flowered most brightly in the post-war experiments happening in electronics, electroacoustic composition and musique concrete. Indeed, it could be argued that modernism's themes, of the fractured and disconnected self, found their fullest expression in concrete — a musical form defined by fragmentation and discontinuity.

In the 60s, the fragmentation that was made concrete in the work of composers like Luciano Berio and Pierre Henry discovered a likeness, if a not wholly accurate reflection, in the distorting-mirror music of the LSD generation. But whereas concrete art seemed to perma-fix the very process of fragmentation, psychedelia frequently charted an Edenic search for child-like wholeness. When concrete composers and psychedelic rock got to look each other in the eye during the 60s, they didn't necessarily see the same thing. But in psychedelia, the more utopian of the concrete composers possibly caught a fleeting glimpse of restored wholeness, while in the fragmentation of concrete, psychedelia's more farsighted cosmonauts were gifted with a method for expressing the consciousness-splintering aspects of an acid trip. In the process, those with good ears noticed how concrete's juxtapositions of ill-matched tones and timbres could also approximate the intense, physically ravishing aspects of the acid experience.

No wonder, then, that The Grateful Dead, the West Coast group that totally absorbed acid culture as a means of enlightenment and expression, embraced academy methods when, on their second album *Anthem Of The Sun* (1968), they attempted a musical recapitulation of an acid trip. For their projected assault on reality, they brought in keyboardist Tom Constanten,

PHOTO GEMS/REDFERNS

deconstruction

hidden wiring of 20th century music, Edwin Pouncey shows go further out brought it in touch with the 60s avant garde

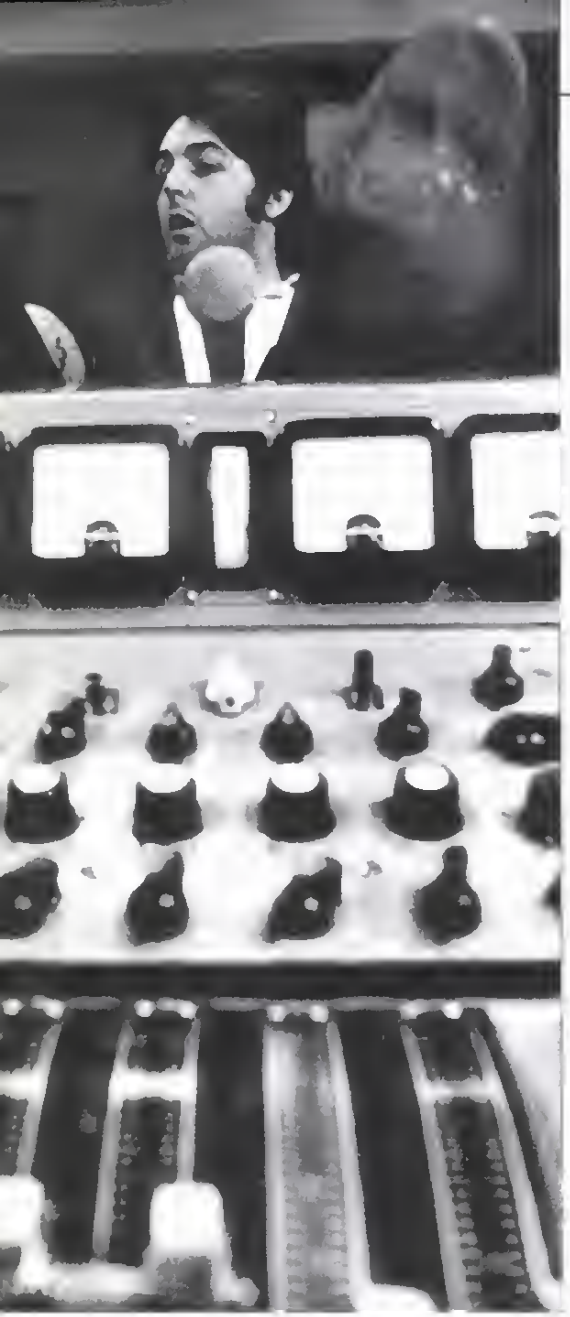
at the invitation of his friend, Dead bassist Phil Lesh, who was himself a composition student of Berio Despite guitarist Jerry Garcia's formidable command of volume and feedback, The Dead felt that their first, self-titled album had failed to capture the essential mindwarp element of the group live, and thus sought to extend their sonic armoury in the studio with techniques picked up from the academic avant garde With the enthusiastic participation of Garcia and Lesh, Constanten applied prepared piano and tape montage methods to the latter part of "That's It For The Other One" Collaged from superimposed performance tapes, his experimental symphony suddenly folds into a bout of musique concrete that falls somewhere between Varese's *Deserts* and the respective keyboard deconstructions of John Cage and Conlon Nancarrow Constanten created one effect by diving into the piano, having first pulled the string on a gyroscope and placed it against the sounding board "The sound," he revealed, "is not unlike that of a chainsaw being taken into it"

Acid burns into rock

All of which was a long way away from the kind of upbeat rock 'n' roll which The Beatles had brought over to America for their appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1963 Three years later, the group's moptop innocence had given way to a harrier, acid-burned recalcitrance Both John Lennon and Paul McCartney were equally fascinated by music's 60s avant garde, and much to the muted disapproval of producer George Martin, they began to assemble tapes that attempted to mirror LSD trips and which they would then splice into the arrangements of their songs Thus the backwards tape treatments and Indian war whoops on "Tomorrow Never Knows", the clanging tram car sound hallucination on the end section of "Strawberry Fields Forever" the tumbling calliope tape loop collage that runs through "Being For The Benefit Of Mr Kite", and the blurred, *Through The Looking Glass* radio effect that haunts "I Am The Walrus" were mechanically aided flashbacks to their acid dreams (and nightmares) This approach reached its zenith (or nadir, depending on which side of the fence the listener chose to sit) with "Revolution No 9", a pure slab of musique concrete that was included on *The White Album*

Unfortunately, only Lennon and his new bride Yoko Ono carried on where "Revolution No 9" left off, with their pair of 'Unfinished Music' albums, *Two Virgins* (1968) and *Life With The Lions* (1969) Before the couple met in October 1967 at London's Lisson Gallery, Yoko Ono had already been an active participant in George Maciunas's radically mischievous, neo-Dadaist Fluxus art group, and had performed with John Cage, David Tudor and Toshiro Mayuzumi Cage's crude 1940 prototype for concrete music, where objects were given the status of musical instruments, had since been remodelled in Western Europe by Pierre Schaeffer's musique concrete approach, and together with Ono's Fluxus-schooled influence and Lennon's surreal Goonish humour, it was probably this version that formed the basis for what one current rock guide has described as "perhaps the most skipped-over track on any Beatles album" On the other hand, "Revolution No 9" continues to fascinate as a perfectly orchestrated deconstruction of everything The Beatles stood for, where melody, harmony and lyrical invention are rudely trashed and replaced with 'noise' In the process, they temporarily reinvented themselves and threw down a gauntlet for their more musically adventurous contemporaries to seize upon

Many of the groups who subsequently fed found sounds into their songs were blissfully unaware of such musique concrete pioneers as Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, Karlheinz Stockhausen or John Cage They were merely following The Beatles' example by adding the appropriate 'psychedelic' effects to an otherwise standard pop song Although it is doubtful whether The Lovin' Spoonful fully realised what they were creating in



1966 by introducing a tape of traffic noise and road drills during the instrumental break of "Summer In The City", they ensured that the song would be remembered in the breach rather than the strict observance of its cheerfully lazy harmony. Regardless of the group's — or producer's — motivations, the sudden intrusion of the atonal noises of the outside world ripping through its tiny rent in the fabric of pop alerted radio audiences to a wholly other reality. (Conversely, they signalled a way back to reality for fazed, confused or lost day trippers.)

Other notable pop and rock musique concrete flirtations from this period include Alex Chilton's pre-Big Star unit The Box Tops' 'sampling' of the sound of a jet passing overhead on "The Letter" (1967), Beach Boy Brian Wilson's atmospheric, evocative and lonesome-sounding train and dog barking session on "Caroline, No" (1966), and the earthshaking A-bomb blast at the epicentre of Love's wired punk anthem "Seven And Seven Is" (from 1967's *Da Capo*). Apart from the obvious anti-war reference, this explosion commemorated the moment when rock 'n' roll innocence was permanently blown away, clearing the way for the massive changes that would rise up out of the ruins. As the war in Vietnam dragged on, politically engaged groups honed rock into a weapon of protest aimed at tipping the balance of popular opinion against US involvement. By detonating their sound bomb on the radio, Love were announcing that a collective finger had pushed the button. Just as 80s rappers would sample the shocking sounds of drive-by shootings for exploitative and journalistic purposes, so 60s rock musicians were using the sounds of combat and consumerism gone mad both to excite/incite their listeners and to drive their protests home.

Freaky électronique

Those who knew and were passionate about contemporary classical and experimental music incorporated it into their own work with more care and deliberation. Frank Zappa's early introduction to the music of Stravinsky, Holst, Ives, Webern and, more importantly, Edgard Varèse (mingled with his love for 50s doowop and R&B) had a profound effect on his interpretation of modern rock music. When Varèse died on 6 November 1965, Zappa composed "The Return Of The Son Of Monster Magnet (Unfinished Ballet In Two Tableaux)" in his memory. The piece took up an entire side of The Mothers Of Invention's debut album, the four-sided *Freak Out!*, which was released the following year. "[This] is what freaks sound like when you turn them loose in a recording studio at one o'clock in the morning on $500 worth of rented percussion equipment," Zappa wrote in his sleevenote. "A bright snappy number. Hotcha!" The resulting "snappy" mix of electronics, Varèse-inspired percussive sonorities, and strange spoken word exchanges between Pamela 'Suzy Creamcheese' Zarubica and the notorious Los Angeles producer, musician and eccentric Kim Fowley, was to become one of the earliest recorded examples of what can be loosely termed 'rock concrete'. Central to his music, however, was Zappa's William Burroughs-tinged sense of humour. Zappa subliminally incorporated Burroughs's cut-up tape recording techniques into such 'rock concrete' pieces as "Nasal Retentive Calliope Music" and "The Chrome Plated Megaphone Of Destiny", which concluded The Mothers' 1968 album *We're Only In It For The Money* (the listener was instructed to read Franz Kafka's short story *In The Penal Colony* before playback). "The Chrome Plated Megaphone..." apparently refers to a voicebox found between a toy doll's legs, but alongside its 'freak' humour, you can also detect warped echoes of Varèse's *Poème Electronique* and Stockhausen's breakthrough work of electronic tape mutation, *Gesang Der Jünglinge*, bubbling under and eventually breaking the surface. For the album sleeve, Zappa hired the graphic artist Cal Schenkel to satirise the Carnaby Street, pop art sentimentality of Peter Blake's cover for *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. It misled many critics into assuming that "The Chrome Plated Megaphone..." was a cynical swipe at Lennon and McCartney's "A Day In The Life", the last track on *Sgt Pepper*'s, when in fact Zappa was fine-tuning his personal art of noise. The culmination of Zappa's commitment to contemporary classical and electronic music was unleashed one month later as *Lumpy Gravy*, an orchestral work which was recorded in New York with the 50 piece Abnuceals Emuukha Electric Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, a few stray Mothers and various cohorts from his entourage of freaks. *Lumpy Gravy* is a crucial work for the way it combines classically motivated interludes, electronic abstractions and rambling spoken word compositions within a basic rock structure. Whereas other 'rock stars' frequently toyed with vague notions of musique concrete and experimental music, Zappa incorporated them into a medium that extended his musical repertoire and pushed the prowess of The Mothers Of Invention to new heights of skill and endurance.

Among those to take Zappa's experimental music approach seriously were the rebellious 60s West Coast superstars Jefferson Airplane, who approached him to produce their third album, *After Bathing At Baxter's* (1967). Zappa declined the offer due to pressure of work, but he eventually teamed up with the group's vocalist Grace Slick on 5 June 1968 to record a freeform composition which they had co-written entitled "Would You Like A Snack". It is a typically erratic keyboard and percussion dominated Zappa number, complete with deviant sexual vocalising from Slick in operatic diva mode. This short piece sends the imagination racing over what might have occurred had Zappa taken control of the Airplane for a whole flight. Even without Zappa's involvement, however, the

Above: Paul McCartney pictured during the sessions which produced The Beatles' 1968 *White Album*. Opposite, left to right: Jefferson Airplane; the sleeve to the Limelight label's *Panorama Electronique* compilation; the artwork from a promotional single by Pierre Henry and Spooky Tooth; The Grateful Dead

PHOTO OF PAUL M CARTNEY: APPLE CORPS LTD

PHOTO OF JEFFERSON AIRPLANE: CHUCK BOYD/REDFERNS

extended soloing of guitarist Jorma Kaukonen and bass player Jack Casady on *Baxter's* is clearly enriched by the example of Frank's forays into the avant garde, and their psychedelic protest rock is transformed into something more substantial and enduring than a 'plastic' soundtrack for the corporate 'Flower Power' counterculture

Concrète in the limelight

By the late 60s and early 70s, even a lethargic music industry was beginning to wake up to the realisation that the boundaries of rock were expanding, and soon the hunt was on to sign up any group that strayed beyond the familiar guitar, bass, drums and vocals line-up One label that attempted to educate the hippy hordes, while shamelessly cashing in on the current craze for electronic and experimental music, was the Mercury Records subsidiary Limelight, whose catalogue of musique concrète, electronic music and classical Indian ragas was described as "The Total Experience In Sound" Packaged in elaborate gatefold sleeves, their abstract artwork mirrored the coloured oil lightshows which were a major feature of any rock concert at the time, Limelight set out to introduce the music of such experimental composers as Pierre Henry, Kagel, Eimert, Ligeti, Berio, Ferrari and Xenakis to audiences who, until *Anthem Of The Sun* hit the racks, were probably unaware of Henry's equally mind blowing *Le Voyage*, an electronic score based on the Tibetan Book Of The Dead Limelight also signed the electronic rock group Fifty Foot Hose, who recorded their lone *Cauldron* album for the label before sliding into obscurity (until that is, they were given the kiss of life in the 90s by the same fanbase that had helped to resurrect the career of The Silver Apples)

Unlike the many who were only just discovering his work through the Limelight label, Pierre Henry was no stranger to psychedelic rock. In 1967 he had collaborated with Michel Colombier on a series of electronic pieces based around pop and rock themes The resulting *Messe Pour Le Temps Présent* marked a dramatic change of direction for Henry With compositions such as "Psyché Rock", Henry's joyous demolition of the rock 'n' roll standard "Louie, Louie", he made contact with rock audiences, which discovered correspondences between the disintegrating logic of his rock concrète and their own hallucinogenically fuelled visions of the world Two years after the release of *Messe Pour Le Temps Présent*, Henry was contacted by Gary Wright from the UK group Spooky Tooth, with a view to collaborating on an electronic mass called *Ceremony* When the album was released, full page adverts were taken out in the rock press, describing it as 'Electronique Fantastique' But Spooky Tooth's leaden Progressive rock dirge, once plugged in to Henry's accompanying electronic squeal, sounds unconnected and toothless More of a mess than a mass

An experimental composer who left a more significant mark on 60s rock was Joseph Byrd Working with his 'electronic rock' group The United States Of America, Byrd narrowed the gulf that separated 'serious' music from rock 'n' roll Recording in 1967, he combined the psychedelic social attack of Zappa's Mothers and the neon-lit starkness of The Velvet Underground (The USA's singer, Dorothy Moskowitz, bore a passing resemblance, both vocal and physical, to Nico) with his own Morton Subotnick-influenced sheets of ring-modulated and synthesized sound to produce the (still undervalued) American answer to Henry's and Colombier's *Messe Pour Le Temps Present*

Europe goes loopy

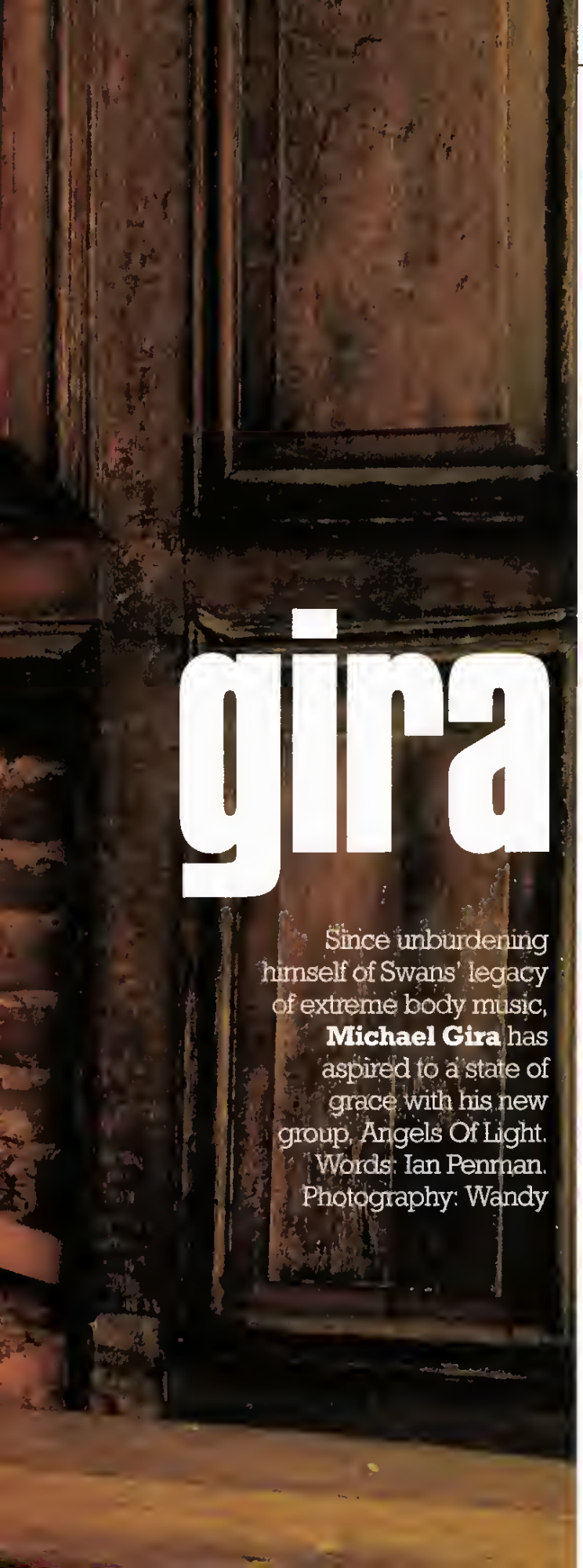
Across Europe too, rock was going through radical changes In Germany, the beat boom of the early 60s had been replaced with a musical aesthetic that critiqued the country's post-war industrial rebirth while looking out towards the cosmos for inspiration Labelled 'Krautrock' by the British music press, one of the first and most influential of these groups was Can Filled with the spirit of change, the group's first recording session in June 1968 included a recording of the riots which had brought Paris to a standstill the previous month (the tape was made by David Johnson, one of the founders of the group) The same year, Holger Czukay and studio engineer Rolf Dammers (under the pseudonym of the Technical Space Composers Crew) created the cosmic concrete masterpiece *Canaxis V*, which rivalled the best electronic work of Czukay's former teacher Karlheinz Stockhausen Czukay's 'acoustic sound painting' layered tape loops of a Vietnamese boat woman singing and gamelan styled guitar over a repeated electronic choral background to create a 'worlds within worlds' effect that is as alien as it is familiar Sounding like it could have been beamed down from a distant galaxy, rather than a tape montage of electronics and a shortwave radio transmission, Czukay's message seemed to be that not only earth but also the cosmos beyond could be brought into earshot at the turn of a dial

The nearest British equivalent to Can was Pink Floyd, whose post-Syd Barrett shows were equipped with quadraphonic sound systems that blasted out such sound effects as UFOs taking off and giant footsteps walking above the heads of the audience Of course, Pink Floyd also encouraged a strain of pomposity to enter the rock arena which gradually took centre stage once the 60s had burnt itself out.

Rewind into the future

When William Burroughs maintained that the future, as well as the past, bleeds through the ruptures opened up in the cut-up process, he could have been describing the work of today's self-consciously postmodern sampling composers The 'plunderphonic' hybrids of John Oswald have built one of the most enduring bridges connecting the pioneer spirit of the 60s with the 90s' relentless referentiality His psychedelic plunderphonics piece *Grayfolded* (1995) was directly inspired by the experimentation that produced *Anthem Of The Sun* Oswald spliced together live selections from various locations of recordings of The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star" to create a telescopic, sonic time tunnel Oswald's simultaneous celebration and extension of The Dead's musical legacy shows that the song might remain the same, but the way of singing it has been irretrievably altered □

PHOTO OF GRATEFUL DEAD MICHAEL OCH'S ARCHIVES



gira scope

Since unburdening himself of Swans' legacy of extreme body music, **Michael Gira** has aspired to a state of grace with his new group, Angels Of Light. Words: Ian Penman. Photography: Wandy

The outermost city limits of Rome, a place where grey stone angels seem to wait for you round each corner, and Michael Gira's afternoon is a transit through the usual rooms — motel, lobby, bar, concert hall. His face, in Italian light, is a tired angel's vulpine skull, parchment skin, a bon viveur's what-me-worry? lines. A frequent and animating smile rubs out the tiredness and replaces it with a kind of abashed glee, a delight in the absurdities of the day.

Even in Mediterranean heat he is crisply turned out in Oxford check, shirt and tie and brogues, a beautiful hat shades his bright, darting eyes from the sun. In repose, Gira's countenance is magnetic: photographs have been remiss, converting its diamond cast to a Mount Rushmore Moment of ruminative fixity halo'd with gloom. Nothing about his work or Gira in the flesh supports this image. Many things in the world today induce an immediate and intensive gloom in me, but Gira's dedication to his art and craft is not one of them.

With Swans — the group Gira birthed, brokered and buried, with sometime partner Jarboe — an End has come and gone and Gira is now in afterlife time. This may be why he calls his new gypsy group Angels Of Light — to differentiate it from the hard body talk of Swans, a group as earthed as tectonic plates. Whatever, Swans now are a legacy, done and dusted, a museum of sound. Gira will do his best to oversee, keeping that *non pareil* name out of a rocky mire where many would prefer it to remain. In another lifetime, some sense may be made of this massive legacy, which began in 1982 with four naked songs, and was wrapped in black bows with 1998's valedictory *Swans Are Dead* live double. Whereas so much alt.culture music is a thin white whine, Swans always met the world head on with a body music as true as disco or dub. Listen now: hear the caterpillar-track grind lift and list and unfold into a beating of wings, a broad and lucent mesh lit up as much by voluptuous Eros as bony Thanatos.

Anywhere [illegible] for [illegible] been assigned [illegible] But not yet [illegible] Gira's death squads of [illegible] popes, the chosen [illegible] violently [illegible] were always [illegible] as "Shame, Humanity, [illegible]

"I thought the music, [illegible] heavy [illegible] so incredibly amazingly uplifting," [illegible] Michael Gira. "It felt so good. I just [illegible] it! I guess maybe the [illegible] have gave people [illegible]

Gira lights up a cigarette, [illegible] a [illegible] Biera and [illegible] back to dead swans and forward to oblique [illegible]

"I still get that 'doom and [illegible] meister' Gira' stuff and I'm so sick of it. I don't even know what to say about it. I mean, when I get depressed — WHO DOESN'T? — but it usually ends up being [illegible] I withdraw for a while and draw on spaces that are inside me."

If you were truly depressed you wouldn't produce so much. "Yeah! I work my ass off! I'm really intensely interested in enjoying and getting some essence out of living. I'm not like this simpering [illegible] *fop*."

He lets out a great hoppity hare of a laugh. He laughs a lot, Michael Gira, he may recently have penned 'My Suicide' ('one of my best songs') but he isn't a suicidal guy. There is a bluesman aspect to Gira, a rough hewn American, given over neither to blanket pessimism nor therapeutic whim. Pragmatic, poetic. Hard working, hard living. Abrasive, affirmative. Picture it, now: Gira as far nearer Howlin' Wolf, say, than the simpering *fops* of US alt. or post-industrial rock.

"Yeah, I don't care about that shit — but I couldn't even dream of putting myself in the same company as Howlin' Wolf. What a genius, man! What a singer! I drove across America a couple times constantly listening to Howlin' Wolf. You can't even approach him! [illegible] elemental — almost like an operatic singer he goes from this deep guttural thing from the pit of his stomach right up to the falsetto. It's amazing, beautiful, complicated, [illegible]."

One reason Gira won't accept my 'born under a bad sign' [illegible] is that he thinks those [illegible] guys probably had one hell of a time. Onstage: the blues. Offstage: short suits, [illegible] footed, [illegible] liquor, a new [illegible] in every old town. And their audiences loved them for their refusal to lie down among the root vegetables and run [illegible] their supposed station. Rock has far less flexible ideas about 'authenticity' and alt.fans always fixed to see their icons 'living out' certain caricatural roles. Sheer [illegible] inevitable, if only because Gira was leaving behind the places [illegible] audience clung to.

"I started to get very frightened looking out in the audience and seeing a sea of greasy, barely post-adolescent young males pounding their heads," recalls Gira. "I realised I wanted nothing to do with that world. Also, hopefully, I caught self parody pretty quickly and decided that to go on like that would be stupid. I deserved better. So I put myself into a different situation and tried to make different kinds of records that did not have to rely on that pummelling aspect."

So Gira began to listen again — to Bob Dylan and Neil Young and others: a bridge into both a quieter Song and a longer career. A certain age, you begin to cast around, vexed now by the music industry's emphasis on perpetual adolescence. Maybe Leonard Cohen runs through your tired head, and you try and discern how these venerated elders have performed their magic act of non-obsolescence: dignified labour, golden repetition. In the long run, it adds up to something more effectively 'revolutionary' than any short term fizzle and pop.

The defining event for Gira was his sole attempted negotiation with a major label. Produced by Bill Laswell, *The Burning World* (MCA, 1989) was an attempt to hollow a softer song out of the pig iron of Swansound. It predicted Gira's current 'singer/songwriter' turn, to sing something simpler with "just myself and one instrument and not rely on the overkill of volume". But whatever its aesthetic merits — and I think Gira is far too harsh on this period, just reissued on the *Various Failures* compilation — on a personal level it was a revelation akin to meeting Mephistopheles on Main Street.

"It was totally devastating in every way imaginable," he remembers, "it sapped my confidence as a singer, as a songwriter, as a musician. Financially, it was a disaster that took me five years to recover from. One of the worst professional experiences I've ever had. Although I enjoyed working with Bill Laswell — and respect him tremendously — I should have had more confidence and produced the record myself. It would have been more me."

So, further on down the road, we meet a new Gira song. The same song, in a way, just breathing different air(s). Angels Of Light is Gira's new loose acoustic assembly, and the songs on the just released *New Mother* are chequerboard chamber pieces, hymns of praise and tenderness, awe and enquiry. If he can still make John Cale's *Music For A New Society* sound like the Wedding March, his most beautiful songs here are as 'up' as Gira has ever sounded.

"Yeah, they're all like little hagiographies. I really tried to step beyond my usual ways of working in Swans — which relied too much on this kind of obsession and visceral imagery, which I'd like to get away from — and just write about what came to mind."

What came in/to Gira's mind makes up quite a palette — literally. "Inner Female" is a paean to Francis Bacon, written "from his point of view, using his imagery, about his brutal all-out approach to living". "The Garden Hides The Jewel" is an exquisite resetting of a Duchamp installation, which has long haunted Gira. "The Man With The Silver Tongue" invokes Viennese 'body artist' Hermann Nitsch. *New Mother*'s tentative acoustic spoor may seem soundly unSwan, but it circles a familiar Gira region: on canvas and in extremis — the Body, covered.

Gira's other work in progress is the 'soiled Ambient' probe of Body Lovers/Haters, which is another sonic world again. Although far from the strummed yet lapidary eroticism of *New Mother*, they similarly start out simple and then "let things accrue", or add shades of "orchestration". Such syntax suggests the tactile acts of applying paint or editing film. The bristling lament of Body Lovers/Haters could be a strip of *sonic film* run through some clanky old editing machine: scratched, bleached, exposed.

"That's exactly how I made that record!" he says. "I just kept *hacking* away at it. I had huge boxes of cassette recordings and loops and things I'd made, just me and two musicians in a room, and I'd record a bunch of ideas and just dump them in the computer and record over it — or match them — cut them up — slow them down — turn them around — until the thing finally was exhausted."

Music as material to be manipulated? I think of the (lost) world of New York avant garde film: Stan Brakhage, Maya Deren, Robert Frank, Jack Smith. These pants-seat pioneers were fundamentally American in their foraging for a radical, new 'urban Frontier' spirit, but they forged themselves by the distant incitements of European modernism. Ditto Gira: body forger, repo man of sound, stateless cartographer.

Deren's tidemark recordings of Haitian voodoo ceremonies start out in bird chirrups, communal breath, rooster thoughts — and end up calling down a bruising, catalytic Other from the mother sky. In London recently, Angels Of Light pulled off a similar feat: starting out ethereal, they locked into a modal flightpath which pulled the breath from your lungs. Just as I was once truly *spooked* by the to-fro of *Swans Are Dead*: drones build, overtones whistle, discrete elements coalesce into a worrying dust devil presence.

"It was really ecstatic to play that material," remembers Gira. "Really *transporting*. Just the physical intensity of the sound and the intense concentration it took to make it was really elating. Just the adrenalin, I guess, the effect the music had on your body. Usually after a tour it was a couple months of depression."

Critics can be expansive about music entering its audience, but have little to say about how it sounds to the performers, whose experience remains closed to us. Gira nods vaguely. "Well, that was sort of my selfish reason for making Swans to begin with — which was to just *hear the sound* — and be overwhelmed by something."

Where *did* Swans fall from? Hearing them for the first time, in the dead dog days of the mid-80s, was like coming upon some Gaudi miracle: a big, bold profane cathedral of sound. Gira was never one to rest upon his laurels, though. Draw a dream graph, today: plot the routes Swans took by indexing Jarboe's credits on successive departures — from simple 'vocals, scream' to beckoning 'vocals, backing vocals, mirage', to a final resplendent place of 'choral/orchestral arrangement'. Song became a golden brow lifting out of deep blue murk — but some kind of urgent communication has always sprung from Gira's lips. Swans grew under the dark sun of a split psyche, fed by Gira's ferocious sense of ego and itch to control — but also this quasi-ethical dream of reaching for something higher, better, holier. Live, Swans had the definite feel of necessary ritual — a tight radius of enacted calibration being the first and best and ultimate way Gira found to step beyond a rigid 'I' and *connect* out: join the audience dots.

"That's what music is!" he affirms. "You know who I found inspirational in that regard was Glenn Branca: intensely egomaniacal and focused, totally *obsessed* — but the music he makes is frankly spiritual, totally transcendent. It's like certain devotional or religious music, or Mozart's *Requiem*, pieces that really reach these grand heights, that's what he's always going for. I worked on one piece he did and that was a tremendously influential experience. Not so much from the point of view of the sound or the style — but just going for the complete transcendent epiphany in sound.

"That's [also] what I liked about Hermann Nitsch. I was in one of his performances back in LA, 78 or 79, just an assistant. It was this relentless *onslaught* of sound — he gathered these punk musicians and street musicians and they were just blowing into these horns for probably six or eight hours and he had the blood and the carcasses and just this ritual that went *on and on* and after a while the wine was flowing and the blood was about two foot deep in the room and it just reached this point where he gave up and *fell* into this *pagan* ritual. It was really beautiful."

Music as elevation, callused fingertips scraping against the Beyond. Gira was vouchsafed a vision of this early on — music as total event: Mind/Body/Light/Sound — which was perhaps only *confirmed* by Branca and Nitsch. Young and on the lam — and full of LSD — he attended a free festival in Belgium, with a line-up so good it's gotta be apocryphal: pre-*Moon* Pink Floyd, The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Amon Düül, and other rock/experimental crossover outfits. This confluence of bowel opening music and brain opening chemicals was truly epiphanic for Gira: a cruel theatre that reminds you that you have a body, but also that you

might transcend it, music seen not merely as social badge or compendium of 'good' solos, but something dizzyingly elemental

"That's what I always EXPECTED it to be! One of the first concerts I went to as a kid was Blue Cheer!" He laughs uproaroously like this needs no further comment "I grew up in Southern California, started taking acid when I was about 11 or 12, was caught up in the whole hippy movement, and to me it was just axiomatic that music was supposed to completely wash through your mind and clean it"

The adolescent body, innately irruptive yet agitated further by blue sunshine and sonic boom no careers advice necessary there, then As Gira describes it, his adolescence reads like the knife-edge paradigm of a once mandatory teenage loop low life brushes, derangement of the senses, existential verification His California is likewise one of the *other* Californias eggbox housing, teenage boredom, cheap drugs, big dreams channelled into petty crimes A white-trash lost continent kept in memoriam by Fante, Bukowski, Towne, Mike Davis, the oubliette LA of Nathanael West's thwarted *Locusts*, or James Rechy's *City Of Night*, whose city angels are numb teenage hustlers Most of all, perhaps, James Ellroy's dark pages

"Oh well, see, that's the LA of my parents They met in UCLA — my mother was a campus debutante, my dad was on a basketball scholarship — they were a classic American post-war optimist couple that quickly degenerated into alcoholism LA is a disaster now, but when I was a kid, you could still walk from my house through the gullies and the fields, all the way down to the beach where I used to surf and take drugs It was really almost rural in certain areas Now every square inch of it is filled in with lawns or tract homes It's really a nightmare"

Gira's grimy life is one few current rock boys would recognise, unless they'd read about it in Genet, Kerouac, Sam Shepard

"I got arrested so many times for drugs and vandalism and breaking and entering and things, the police decided that my mother wasn't capable of taking care of me — she was an alcoholic — so they sent for my father, and he took me first to Indiana — he was a business executive — and to Europe I promptly ran away and hitchhiked around Europe, ended up working in a factory his wife's stepmother owned in Germany for a year My father's company had this perk that they would put me in a Swiss school to the age of 18 I just refused to go, so he said, 'Right, if you won't go to this school you're working in this factory' He thought I'd last a month or two, and I ended up working there a year! And after a year he said, 'OK, now you're going to the school' — and I ran away I hitchhiked around Europe and I ended up in Israel, where I spent about a year panhandling, selling my blood, working on a kibbutz, working in a copper mine, just generally doped out, a vagrant. Finally, I was arrested there, spent some time in jail, and then I went back to California I tried to go to high school but I just couldn't. It was too surreal to be in this middle class suburban high school after the experiences I'd had I quit and I worked some construction jobs, and saw how pointless that was for me So I took this test and got into college, then went to art school"

There to be refashioned and 20 years later end up a cover line on *Artforum*? Not so fast, now as with so many of us in the liminal 70s, punk's rude interruption put paid to any such dreams of stepping-stone culture

"Punk to me was just SO relevant!" Gira flashes a great big Xmas smile "The first time I heard it on the radio driving down the Hollywood freeway it was just YES!" He bangs a phantom dashboard "It seemed much more relevant to real life and to culture Even though I liked certain artists, it just seemed that art was this sequestered, elite enterprise — it had nothing to do with real life or real serious questions"

When Gira wants to cut off a discussion about someone he *doesn't* like, he calls them "foppish" (or "precious" or — eek! — "too English") Conversely, his higher terms of praise (he is not a man who gushes indiscriminate praise) centre on "solipsistic" — alone, or in conjunction with "autodidact" This could suggest dissimulated vanity (approving only those qualities he sees in himself), or a way of honouring those people who once turned his world around Like the firefight of punk, certain French texts delivered an incendiary power an entirely *other* way of seeing/saying things, outside traditional channels Certain writers shift (or obliterate) the boundary line between life and letters of fire From certain signs, I'd always assumed that Georges Bataille must once have touched Gira in a turnaround way "A bit too *precious*," he avers, he always preferred the go-wilder shores of Rimbaud, Lautreamont, Celine and Genet Autodidacts Solipsists Body lovers/haters

"The thing I liked about Genet *was* the solipsism, the *maniacal* solipsism his refusal to accept 'reality' and his insistence on dictating reality on his own terms and just refusing any kind of constraint upon his imagination Also I identified with him because I first started reading books seriously when I was in jail in Israel the prison library had *120 Days Of Sodom* Genet, Oscar Wilde" He hoots in disbelief "And that's how I started to read — there was nothing else to do but just masturbate and read!"

A critic once described Genet's project as "masturbating the world" the ultimate onanist, merging sacred and profane into one (handed) gesture Gira's most cerebral work likewise comes down to the blunt (f)acts of bodily routine as if Song might turn to air all that would otherwise be an unbearable agitation deep in his cells

"Well, I remember in the early days of Swans one of the things I wanted to do was *completely erase* my body with the music I felt it was like this *agglomeration* of cannibalistic molecules that just needed to be dissipated like a Dali painting where you see the paint atomising I just couldn't stand my own physical presence Maybe it had to do with taking LSD — sometimes you just feel this *weight* Maybe it had to do with lack of comfort with my sexuality Or maybe just a kinda unreality about living that I gained at an early age from taking lots of LSD and watching a lot of television — because even when I was in a prison cell in Israel, *nothing* really seemed like it had any kind of consequence"

> **"I'm revolted by people baring their problems in public and feeling this need to *quote Cher*, which is like wanting to smell someone's armpits"**

So how did this itchy, schizzy kid find his voice, first break into Song? "When I first started singing I was in a really terrible punk band in LA and I think I probably sang about two octaves higher than I do now, because I took a lot of methedrine! Then I went to New York and I had another band which was really atrocious I did an EP with Swans and I still didn't really have my voice Once I started opening the music up, making it slower, filling up the space with my voice, I found this place in my stomach to sing from"

It sounds like a fable, and maybe it is a boy in search of his Silver Tongue Gira's trajectory might be limned as the search for his own lost chord, four-finger host for a feeling of lost wholeness Early lyrics evince what can only be called *womb envy*, when it is not nostalgia Swans titles worked a distinctively medial zone of ambivalence between, oh, "Public Castration (Is A Good Idea)" and "Anonymous Bodies (In An Empty Room)", between "Sex, God, Sex" and "Money Is Flesh" between utopian hope and utilitarian humping Songs where *"skin is hanging off in sheets"* and the firstborn is *"a red sack full of failure/infested with future crumbs"*, are Gira at his most Sartrean if hell is other people, intimacy is the poisoned chalice It pre-dates dating, too with the mother/child scene being only the first time *"you kept me hanging on"* Like tattoos he cannot decide whether to flaunt or have erased, the words 'MOTHER' and 'FATHER seem never far from Gira's lyrical mind *"I am evil, and unrepentant, just like my father before me"* (from the *New Mother* song, "Shame") Had he consciously seeded this figurative loop or would he really rather not know about the shadow — the pivotal thing that psychoanalyst Serge Leclaire calls our 'narcissistic wound' — behind his Song?

"Although I don't want to get too specific it would be the intense grotesque alcoholism of my mother That's something i'm really coming to grips with right now, which is how much she inhabits me I used to witness [her] sitting alone in a room drinking for days and days, talking, full blown conversations by herself, in the same stinky bathrobe she wore every day This complete interior resentment and hatred of the world Although I always was kinda cavalier about any effect it might have had on me, I'm more and more examining how she lives in me"

He isn't interested in analysis or therapy? "Nah, self indulgent I think it's part of the challenge to *deal* with your problems Although certain aspects I mean, normally I'm revolted by it, people baring their problems in public and feeling this need to *quote Cher*, which is like wanting to smell someone's armpits or something!"

The son is shining now with sardonic splendour "On the other hand, I think it *is* healthy to look at how what would normally be called 'evil' or violence, and how that transfers from generation to generation How personal relationships bleed from one generation into another — the father's cruelty transfers into the son, who then finds that aspect in himself My father's generation would have shut themselves off from those questions Stoic they had to be stoic"

As far as drinking goes, has he ever felt torn between the bad seed of his Bottle and wanting to make a clean start? "Oh, I would *never* do that," he protests "I went to AA for a couple years when I was a kid When I finally got off drugs, I just wandered back to California and somehow I ended up in an AA or NA meeting In retrospect, I realised just how cultish it was, the whole group mentality thing people sharing their horrible *feelings*" He pauses Another sardonic gleam "So no, I would never do that I had a period where alcoholism was really a problem, where I realised I'd been spending *about* 14 hours a day in the bar I can't say — because it would be a cliche — 'I have it under control now', but it doesn't get to the depths it did"

Don't most men go through some kind of odd or 'lost' or transitional period round about 30? Where fear of Time's onrush pushes them into

"Panic? Fear of complete uselessness?" The laughter now is in a higher gear owlish, self-damning, fond all at once He continues "I do think I've gotten better at disciplining myself in my work and criticising myself and refusing to let bad things go out into the public domain I'm struggling now at a personal level to try and not be such an *evil* person" A raconteur's twinkle lights up his straight-man face "But I'm not sure I've accomplished that."

It's worth noting that in the time I spend with Gira, he is evenly courteous to everyone In the past, he feels that his temper had let him down, even damaged Swans' arc of opportunity "I had a really bad attitude," he testifies "I alienated a lot of people and I didn't realise until very recently that not only wasn't it wise from an empirical or a career point of view — it's also just *not* good, *not* healthy I mean, I have the reputation for being an *incredible* asshole I mean, *really* I had no respect for the music industry People — maybe they're misguided, maybe they're venal — they still deserve respect It's a skill I just never learned — or maybe I've learned it now This band doesn't hate me now! Most groups of people I know hated me"

Whoah there, Sisyphus! What about his good qualities? "My *good qualities?*" Gira parrots in gleeful disbelief "I'm still struggling to discover them, trying not to be such a bad person It's terrifying to me to think that obviously I'm going to die and by the time I'm lying on my death bed I might have blown it I will have to have done something worthwhile"

Meaning, in practical terms "Just keep working Fortunately I'm not relying on record labels now so I just do it no matter what I have to it's what I do"

He just has to, because he hears the ether sound of a certain Song always *just* out of reach, because he's maybe the last of a certain raggedy lineage — Kerouac slurring and belligerent on a slick chat show, Sam Shepard and his father alike as two worms in a mescal bottle, Genet sleeping rough, Sartre frazzling his Being to Nothingness with daily amphetamines — because he's wholly American, because he's a little bit German, because they *love* him in Finland, because of Willie Nelson's battered guitar, because "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore", because he hitchhiked and is hitchhiking still, because Lautreamont died for nobody's Booker, because love will save you, because surely to God-Sex-God there's got to be something *better*, less *boring* than oh pornography or born again Puritans something better, for all our bodies

And it takes a while, but one *morning* you hear this newborn sound, then realise it's Michael Gira's warmth seeping out into a cold, cold world It's not sundered limbs and sulphurised bodies and dead places he's singing now, it's mothers and lovers and any number of loved others and so you get ready to drop your own final reluctance, reaching now for what surely lies on the other side of

"Yeah" The born again angel/daemon reaches for his dandy's hat and readies himself for one more exit, one more room, one more departure "*Yeah* I usually just kinda leap into situations and claw my way out of them you know?" □ *Angels Of Light's* New Mother *is out now on Young God/Fringecore*

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Circuit Amour 15

Rob Swift The Ablist (Asphodel)
Aparatchiks Recorded Supplement (Avant Garde)
Wendy Carlos Secrets Of Synthesis (CBS)
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Compiled by The Sideman, Circuit Amour, PBS FM 106.7, Melbourne, Australia, Wednesdays midnight-2am

Ocean Club 15

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Quarks Kikyo (Pole Mix) (Monika)
To Rococo Rot The Amateur View (City Slang)
Carl Craig Vs Johnny Blas The New Latinaires (Ubiquity)

Compiled by Gudrun Gut and Thomas Fehlmann, Ocean Club Radio, Radio Eins/ORB, Berlin, Germany, Fridays 11pm-1am

Selectricity 15

Imminent Starvation Tentrack One (Ant-Zen)
Leo Garcia Clap 2 (Traum)
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Pole Module (Kiff SM)
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Black Lung Prema (Nova Zembla)
The Modernist Orange Coloured Sky (Eat Raw)

Compiled by Melody Boy, Selectricity, Aarhus, Denmark, e-mail: selectricity@heaven.dk

WSUM 15

Harry Partch Enclosure 5 (Innova)
The Not Missing Horns Project Perpetual Motion Sickness (Leo Lab)
Faust Ravvivando (Klangbad)
Isotope 217/Commander Mindfuck/Designer EP (Aesthetics)
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Horn, Kendig & Dickey Screwdriver! (Leo Lab)
Cul De Sac Crashes To Light (Thirsty Ear)
Jim O'Rourke Eureka (Domino)
Suzie Ibarra & Assif Tsahar Home Cookin' (Hopscotch)
Ghost Tune In, Turn On, Free Tibet (Drag City)
Godspeed You Black Emperor! Slow Riot For New Zero Kanada (Kranky/Constellation)
Olivia Block Pure Gaze (Sedimental)
Various Sonic Circuits VI (Innova)
Roscoe Mitchell In Walked Buckner (Delmark)
Fred Lonberg-Holm Site Specific (Explain)

Compiled by Matt Spinner, WSUM 91.7 FM, Madison, USA, Mondays and Tuesdays from 8pm

The Office Ambience

Archie Shepp/Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio Conversations (Delmark)
Warn Defever I Want You To Live 100 Years (Lo Recordings)
Capitol K Sounds Of The Empire (Planet µ)
David Toop Museum Of Fruit (Caipirinha)
Mouse On Mars Distroia (Rough Trade Germany)
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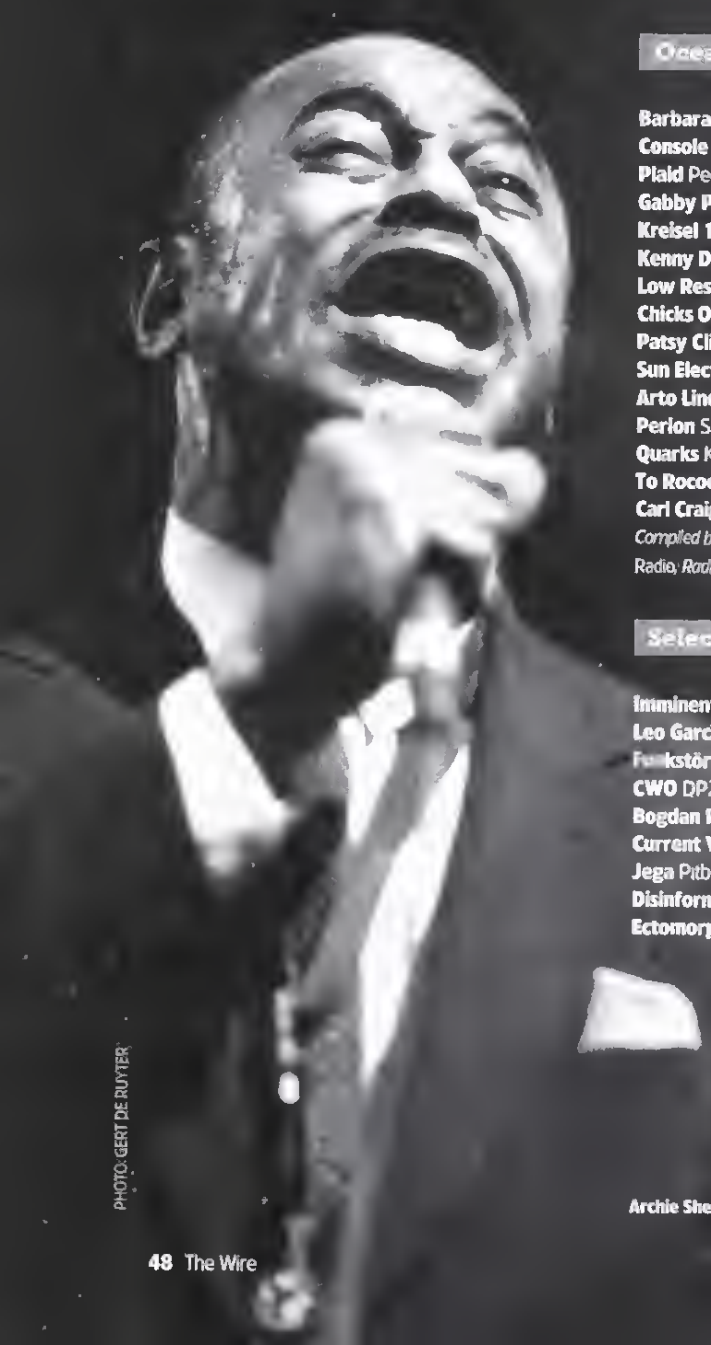
She Satellite Poison Ups (Geist)
Evan Parker & Georg Graewe Unity Variations (Okka Disk)
Various The Bali Sessions (Rykodisc/360°)
Nels Cline & Gregg Bendian Interstellar Space Revisited (Atavistic)
Suicide The Second Album (Blast First)
Brokeback Field Recordings From The Cook County Water Table (Thrill Jockey)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System



Archie Shepp

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sound check

In the hot seat: July's selected albums and singles

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Plus new reissues, compilations, avant rock, classical, critical beats, electronica, jazz and outer limits releases in brief

Si Begg
Commuter World
CAIPIRINHA MUSIC CA12014 CD

An offbeat project — a Techno concept album not based on imaginary dystopias but exploring an actual place through collaged soundscapes. And this is not LA or Tokyo but North West London, transport Zones Five and Six on the Metropolitan line — Betjeman territory. The tubeline provides a narrative thread to the tracks, starting with beats sketched in around the familiar shuttling rhythms of the train and moving on to Oxford Street, office ambience being "Bored At Club UK", back home via the NCP car park and on into night sessions round Ruislip Manor.

The places aren't just pegs for musical fantasies, rather the grooves and Scanneresque ambiences — sometimes faintly sketched, sometimes full-blooded Techno — shadow the environmental recordings with their vague snatches of conversation, footsteps, train announcements, etc. All the recordings were made while Begg was living in the area and the CD sports a cast list of friends' voices. What's interesting is the pay-off between the blankness of the music and the non-entity of the spaces. Although Begg expresses a certain muted utopianism about Metroland — "It's a very peaceful place to live," he comments, "which is strange considering the population is so dense" — the theme of the album is certainly boredom, from tracks about delays on the Met, to ME and sleep deprivation after all-night sessions.

The only way up is Techno and drugs, and later tracks unravel in noodly, euphoric or paranoid directions, imitating the effects of acid, dope and speed. But such transformations themselves blend with the routines of place, the mix of hallucination and amphetamine flutter on 'Post Jack Journey' mirroring the rhythms and vistas of a dawn train journey. What happens here happens often in a subdued key, but it's refreshing to have Techno's visionary moments grafted onto the reality of place, rather than simply scoring fantasies.

MATT FFYTCHE

Bernocchi/Kondo/Laswell
Charged
R&S AMB9955 CD

Charged follows Toshinori Kondo and Bill Laswell's involvement in Paul Schutze's Phantom City, and their trio with Eraldo Bernocchi effectively operates as a satellite to that project. Each bears a similar debt to the 70s recordings of Miles Davis. *Charged*, however, entirely lacks Phantom City's dynamic power and textural richness. Nils Petter Molvaer's 1997 album *Khmer* also went this way with much greater conviction. *Charged* is dreadfully pallid in comparison.

So this is just another workaday session for Laswell, who increasingly churns this sort of thing out between more worthwhile endeavours. This is unfortunate for Kondo, who is a terrifically exciting player — his wielding of processed trumpet in Peter Brötzmann's Die Like A Dog quartet is devastatingly effective. Here, however, he is virtually left to carry the recording on his own, for he's getting no help from Laswell or Bernocchi's anaemic rhythm tracks.

Sadly, this is simply more Laswellian detritus, destined to obfuscate an intermittently inspired catalogue. As such, it does no one any favours, least of all the participants.

TIM OWEN

Jeb Bishop/Kent Kessler/ Tim Mulvenna
Jeb Bishop Trio
OKKA DISK OD12029 CD

The Vandermark 5
The Vandermark 5 Vs Santo
SAVAGE SOUND S990502 82056 CD

The Vandermark 5
Simpatico
ATAVISTIC ALP107 CD

Although Bishop's unit has been heard for some time as the pulsing heart of Chicago's Vandermark 5, *Jeb Bishop Trio* marks the trombonist's album debut as leader. Eschewing avant garde trickery, Bishop applies his robust tone to the business of no nonsense jazz improvisation. Strong melodies supply the impetus, but the group takes its time, delving and probing, working through the options. Kent Kessler on bass and drummer Tim Mulvenna respond appreciatively to Bishop's striking and authoritative voice, stretching out for an excursion that effectively tests the format's potential, with neither frills nor fuss.

The two CDs by Ken Vandermark's quintet find the trio more tightly circumscribed by the leader's tough tenor and Dave Rempis's clenched alto. But they kick back pugnaciously. *Vs Santo* was recorded live towards the end of last year at Chicago's Empty Bottle. *Simpatico* is a studio recording from the same period. The five pieces common to both albums enable you to compare the group's performance with and without audience support. Predictably, the live set is a little more ragged and has a slightly higher energy level, while *Simpatico* is characterised by enthusiasm and unpretentious directness. In both cases, the group cuts through the intricacy of the compositions, as they swing from snarling ferocity to boisterous simmering. A highlight is "Vent", for which, in both versions, Bishop shifts to electric guitar. He whips up a searing maelstrom that precipitates tumbling ensemble interplay, precariously balanced and constantly threatening to descend again to frenzy.

However, neither record is consistently confrontational, and elsewhere Bishop's guitar contributions are rather less upfront. Although driving post-bop and free jazz fire have left their mark, this music can unambiguously embrace rock as readily as it follows up on the teasing spatial explorations favoured by members of the AACM. Coloration is extended by Vandermark's evident proficiency on B flat and bass clarinets, but throughout, taut and concise soloing serves the needs of an integrated group sound.

On *Simpatico* each composition has a dedicatee. These range from bebop trombonist Frank Rosolino to saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, from bassist Curtis Counce, who worked with Clifford Brown and Stan Kenton, to clarinettist John Carter, who is best known for his collaborations with trumpeter Bobby Bradford. The diversity is not arbitrary. The Vandermark 5 have been tempered through immersion in this variegated tradition. Their respect for the tradition manifests itself in their sure-footed playing rather than by self-conscious and facile allusion, and *that* is the hallmark of The Vandermark 5's current dynamism.

JULIAN COWLEY

Cignature tunes: Caspar Brötzmann

PHOTO HARRY BORDEN

Brokeback

Field Recordings From The Cook County Water Table

THRILL JOCKEY THRILL070 CD

Tortoise s bassist Douglas McCombs was already involved in at least two other groups *Eleventh Dream Day* and Pullman before he began his solo project, Brokeback Unsurprisingly for Brokeback s debut album he draws from that same Chicago pool of polyglots that feeds into groups like Isotope 217 Chicago Underground Orchestra and, of course Tortoise, whose John McEntire features here on keyboards and percussion McCombs's six-string bass dominates and his poised melodic lines familiar from Tortoise are given spartan but telling accompaniment On "After The Internationals" for instance two double basses join him in a delicious low end clash

If the music is low key, however it would be a disservice to describe it as 'languid or Ambient' Even at its most vaporous it is held in shape by McCombs s compositional sense and his strong basslines The field recording aspect of the title refers to the album's occasional use of found sounds Birdsong can be corny but the whippoorwills at the beginning of "The Wilson Ave Bridge At The Chicago River, 1953" evoke an Eno-like sense of time and place Its near subliminal percussion supports a gorgeous melody, which exemplifies the album's blend of "twang and low tone" in McCombs's words "The Great Banks", meanwhile, is a version of Tortoise's "On The Banks Of Rivers", where basses and a subtle rhythm-loop back Stereolab's Mary Hansen on vocals The album ends with a brief solo bass meditation Discreet music indeed

MIKE BARNES

Caspar Brötzmann

Mute Massaker

ROUGH TRADE RTD19533622 CD

When Albert Ayler was asked why he d forsaken the modes of traditional jazz for pure free sound, his reply was admirably direct "I've lived more than I can express in bop terms alone" In the five years since *Home*, the last disc by his power trio Massaker you get the feeling that Caspar Brotzmann has come to pretty much the same conclusion While Massaker were undoubtedly kings of slow-burning guitar pyrotechnics over repeat riffing, there was always something two-dimensional about them The music might have been thrilling and visceral, but its lack of any real emotional depth evidently troubled the guitarist

After two and a half years on the road, Massaker had clearly run their course, and Brotzmann, who had just turned 36 went into retreat to rethink his music In early 98 he began rehearsing new bassist Ottmar Seom and drummer Robert Daemmeg, in between listening hard to inspirational rock, free jazz and, especially dark-hearted blues In late December he was ready to go back into the studio, where he and his new rhythm section cut *Mute Massaker* live in two days straight

Like Ayler before him Brotzmann has narrowed his strategies to two mournful blues dirges and ecstatic, "Voodoo Chile"-style soulscrapers Tracks often start out as directionless meanders through troughs of feedback before Brotzmann edges forward with some stray notes as he tentatively snatches a theme from the air Once it has been clearly stated he comes at it from every angle each time re-stating it more forcefully and tearing at it with his teeth, in the process piling up behind him a towering edifice of noise And just when it is about to collapse under its own weight, the rhythm section inevitably kicks in, working with the furious vigour of your favourite dumb rockers to transport the piece elsewhere

An air of desperation characterises this music, born of Brotzmann's struggle to cut the excess and shoot straight for the

The Birthday Party have another bad hair day

The Birthday Party
Live 81-82
4AD CAD9005 CD

"Thank you," lisps the well-reared colonial boy, determined not to show himself up in the home country, "I love your haircut as well . ." To a man, the Britfops dart for their vanity mirrors to confirm it's them he's talking about. Before his barely masked contempt properly surfaces, he sweetly announces, "This is "Zoo-Music-Girl"," only to be brutally cut off by two guitars scything down hard either side of a runaway locomotive riff, and you just know it's not heading for the cute koala enclosure. When The Birthday Party skipped Melbourne for London at the beginning of the 80s, they quickly discovered that a common language and a love of early Pop Group records didn't guarantee that they belonged to the same species. Even after their audience's curiosity had largely converted into adoration, The Birthday Party and their British fans used to face off against each other, neither faction certain who was on the outside of the bearpit looking in.

Thriving off the tension, BP also carried over into their performances the buzzing irritability that fermented from their disappointment at finding themselves adrift in 1981 Britain, amid pop's new fop hedonists, petrified post-punk puritans and playschool goths. They counterattacked live by pounding their all into concerts of bloodcurdling ferocity; often as not, the fury was directed inward, if one was out of sorts with the others, or they were too far out of their heads. But they were rarely less than a compelling spectacle. Listening to this, their first officially approved live album — presumably *Drunk On The Pope's Blood*, the atrocious 12" EP they split with Lydia Lunch, doesn't count — makes you wonder how come it took them so long. Bodyslammed against the volume and presence of these performances — in London 1981, Bremen and Athens in 1982 — familiar songs are bruised, blackened and distended to the point where they split open. On a bad night, their contents would spill out messily, gaudy and colourful, but when they really hit it, as here, the songs emerge raw, livid and shockingly tender.

On the 1981 London set, the group attack the absurdist material of their first British album proper, *Prayers On Fire*, like they were The Three Stooges directed by Artaud, with Mick Harvey and Rowland S Howard's guitars poking and prodding their wilful, squabbling riffs, all the time tugging at Tracy Pew's anchor bass, while Nick Cave howls over lines and fragments of lyrics that had been pushed through the shredder. Accidentally or maliciously? The others aren't saying. The Stooges' jester hat is all the licence he needs for his dirty, licentious, leering performances, where he cackles come-ons like, *"I kiss the hem of her skirt/My life's a boxful of dirt"*, or *"Oh God, please let me die beneath her fists"*, in the cockfight that is "Zoo-Music-Girl". Hard to believe now that these funny, stupid and mesmerising songs would cause so much offence later on. Suddenly nobody laughs anymore.

For The Birthday Party, however, the more desperate their personal lives, the harder they pushed back at the schoolma'amly cultural arbiters who revoked their jester's licences. Needless to say that their gallows humour got grimmer and funnier. The 1982 Bremen versions of four songs from *Junkyard* are tremendous. With drummer Phill Calvert — who'll shortly be thrown out — barely hanging onto his seat, forcing Mick Harvey to cover, their songframes are more precariously elastic, even as each player's role is out of necessity more clearly defined. Having done absurd, they are now courting the ridiculous, with pulped versions of "Hamlet (Pow Pow)" and Ballard's *Crash* ("Dead Joe"), Bataille's Death & Desire essays ("6" Gold Blade") and a sorrow-filled penny dreadful, "She's Hit". Best of all, the disc also captures a rare performance of their great single "The Friend Catcher", where Howard block-chords and pedals a formidable wall of noise, out of which materialise Harvey and Pew's slow-rolling thunder rhythm and Cave's fabulous nursery rhyme.

By now they must be sensing they haven't got much time left, yet on a good night like this, they take the ballads real slow, like they are relishing every detail. Swinging this low like Quasimodo, their vision of suffering is especially grotesque, and with each swing-past, they simultaneously repel and rend your heart with a lascivious look swollen with desires destined never to be fulfilled.

BIBA KOPF

heart. Hendrix's ghost is evident throughout, most obviously during the closing "Woodstock Hymn", while elsewhere Brotzmann's playing recalls Sonny Sharrock's pioneering jazz-noise guitar in Last Exit, the group he shared with Caspar's saxophonist father, Peter. However, the slow melancholy blues pieces are the real revelation, where Brotzmann picks out a trail with frail, slurring notes, like he's too hurt to fully sound them. The same kind of world-weariness manifests itself in Japanese guitarist Keiji Haino's bruised soul music, it also harks back to those blues records Brotzmann has been soaking himself in. Invoking the bleak hopelessness of Blind Willie Johnson's "Dark Was The Night", his Berlin blues sound listless and lost, like he has been homeless far too long.

This is Brotzmann's least modern-sounding and most straightforwardly melodic record but it contains his most expressive music yet.

DAVID KEENAN

Capitol k
Sounds Of The Empire
PLANET µ ZIQ008 CD

Making their album debut on Mike Paradinas's Planet µ imprint, Capitol k have come up with a melange of sound combinations all competing for attention over brash drum patterns. There's an uncertain feeling of adventure — the analogue squibbling of "Little Submarine", for example, is fine, as is their handling of the insistent drums — but the components don't cohere.

The Capitol k duo — Kristian Craig Robinson and Cliff Harris — have great ears and must have overflowing record collections, but the album's never more than a clever digest of their tastes. Of course, there's some pleasure to be had in all the crafty sample surfing, and guitars don't faze these boys. Indeed, they're often at their best on tracks such as "Cosmonaut", where they ditch dance categories for surprisingly effective interfaces with rock. "Lagoon" is similarly pleasing, but stripped of the additional sampled matter it would sound pretty conventional. The way "Cosmonaut" and "People" climax in a welter of feedback suggests more noise might have been a good idea. Nonetheless, with so much going on in this highly-wrought album, Capitol k leave you intrigued as to which of its many directions they might follow in the future.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Günter Christmann & Alexander Frangenheim
Alla Prima
CONCEPTS OF DOING CO0001 CD

Phil Durrant & Alexander Frangenheim
Further Look
CONCEPTS OF DOING CO0002 CD

Evan Parker & Günter Christmann
Here Now Solos/Duos
CONCEPTS OF DOING CO0003 CD

Named after an improv-meets-dance festival in Stuttgart, Concepts Of Doing is a new label founded by its organiser, the double bass player Alexander Frangenheim

The first release sees him partnered by veteran German improvisor Gunter Christmann. In the late 60s/early 70s, Christmann, along with fellow improvisors Vinko Globokar, Albert Mangelsdorff and Paul Rutherford, transformed the trombone from an unfashionable jazz instrument into a purveyor of radical sonic subtleties. Although Frangenheim and Christmann have been collaborating since 1988, on the evidence of *Alla Prima* they're not a particularly well matched duo. Christmann is by far the more intriguing improvisor, often producing captivating vocal effects through the mouthpiece, reminiscent of the great Phil Minton, tiny, tense, stretched sounds that sigh and splutter before dying away. Alongside these, Frangenheim's purposeful arco and quasi-rhythmic pizzicato bass sounds rather prosaic. He hasn't yet integrated the harmonic/percussive/textural aspects of his playing with the kind of seamless, dramatic intensity of master bassists like Barry Guy and Simon H Fell. But there is more of a vigorous dialogue going on in the closing three duets when Christmann switches to cello.

Frangenheim and violinist Phil Durrant — here without electronic manipulations — make a far more cohesive duo. Their 14 non-idiomatic improvisations on *Further Lock* could easily appeal to fans of adventurous string quartets of more adventurous composers like Richard Barrett, James Dillon and Brian Ferneyhough. Each piece is possessed by an air of alert inquiry, of rigorous attention to timbral detail. "Mid First" abounds in gritty, gristly, even grotesque textures, "Rel" is more reflective with Durrant's delicate, singing tone complemented by Frangenheim's deeper, darker rhythmic tendencies. Work of this subtlety and imagination repays repeat hearings.

Though they appeared together on Globe Unity Orchestra's *Live In Wuppertal* LP (1973), *Here Now* documents Gunter Christmann and Evan Parker's first duo recordings, made in January 1988. The highpoint is undoubtedly "Here Now 2", featuring Parker on soprano and Christmann on trombone. The two Improv masters are on sparkling form, blending highly individual vocabularies for eight minutes of bustling energy, serpentine grace, surreal humour and poignant reverie. An entire CD of soprano/trombone duets would doubtless have resulted in a breathtaking album. But as it stands, *Here Now* is a bit of a hotchpotch, featuring three duets with Christmann on cello — interesting, but not a match for his riveting trombone work — plus a few technically advanced, though mostly unsurprising solos. Christmann's "Quantum" for trombone is a delight, but do we really need another lengthy soprano piece by Parker?

CHRIS BLACKFORD

The Clarinet Trio

Oct 1 98

LEO LAB 058 CD

All-clarinet ensembles are rare but not unheard of in improvised music. This trio features Jurgen Kupke on clarinet, and Gebhard Ullmann and Theo Nabicht on bass clarinets. Kupke has performed a range of music from modern classical to New Orleans jazz, while Nabicht plays contemporary composition and improvises, as well as writing for theatre. Gebhard Ullmann regards himself as broadly a jazz player.

The functional title commemorates the sunny autumn day in Berlin when this disc was recorded. Fortunately, their music contrasts strongly with their somewhat prosaic group name and titles. The varied pieces, for solo, duo and trio combinations, range from free explorations of gentle multiphonics, slap-tonguing devices and toneless sounds, to a pair of weird covers. After a ghostly start, their trio take of the standard "Tea For Two" moves into a tango rhythm with dissonant variations. The only other non-original is a touching version of Nino Rota's "Parlami Di Me", which closes the disc. Their own "Gospel" and "Blaues Lied" are both as intensely bluesy as their titles suggest.

This music is oblique, sometimes tentative, often haunting, with the rough, unfinished but vibrant quality of true improvisation. An understated delight.

ANDY HAMILTON

Nels Cline & Gregg Bendian

Interstellar Space Revisited

ATAVISTIC ALP102 CD

John Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* is wisely regarded as jazz's greatest, most intense duo album. Recorded in 1967, when there weren't many doors left for Coltrane to blow open, he was accompanied only by the fantastic free percussionist Rashied Ali. Freed of the harmonic restraints of piano and bass, he and Ali leapt even further out of time, where they discovered regions of unknown tongues. Such is the degree of reverence surrounding this most holy of jazz artefacts, that the news of guitarist Nels Cline and drummer Gregg Bendian's intention to 'cover' it from beginning to end was greeted with guffaws at *The Wire* HQ. Yet this pair had the credentials. Cline, of US rockers The Geraldine Fibbers, has played sideman on countless diverse jazz/free rock projects alongside the likes of saxophonist Vinny Golia and Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, while Bendian has weighed in with such heavyweights as Cecil Taylor and Derek Bailey. Still, the nerve of the men.

The first shock Cline and Bendian spring is just how faithfully they adhere to *Interstellar Space*'s basic melodic structures. "Mars", appropriately, is brutal, with Bendian taking it faster than Ali, but when Cline drops in he hits Coltrane's lick head-on and virtually note-perfect. He substitutes the tenorist's strained, upper range squeals with fast, snapping note clusters plucked from up around the machine head, or alternately, he plays call and response with himself and a wailing tremolo arm. It is on the more delicate pieces, like "Venus", however, when bluster and sheer velocity aren't enough to get them through that they reveal the depth of their engagement with Coltrane's music. Via judicious use of the volume pedal, Cline releases wisps of ethereal feedback, sounding the melody with round, blurry tones, while Bendian lays out softly on bells and brushes.

In concluding the disc with a version of "Lonnie's Lament", from the melancholy 1964 masterpiece *Crescent*, the duo confirm the depth of their communion with Coltrane's music, Cline floating his notes on Bendian's vibraphone ripples. A poignant end to a fearlessly executed project.

DAVID KEENAN

Miles Davis/Various Artists

Panthalassa: The Remixes

COLUMBIA CSK40650 CD

Mark Isham

Miles Remembered: The Silent Way Project

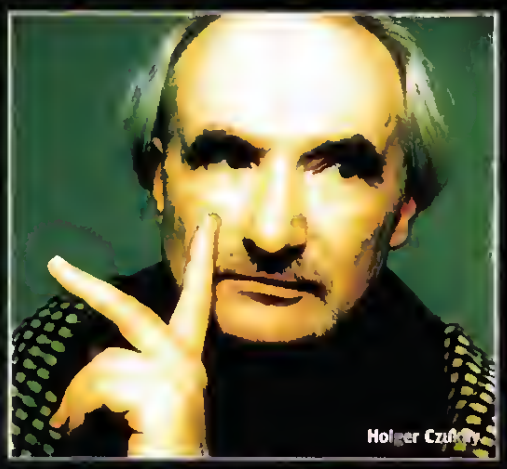
COLUMBIA CK69901 CD

Following hard upon Bill Laswell's *Panthalassa* project, in which tracks from such influential Miles Davis releases as *In A Silent Way*, *On The Corner* and *Get Up With It* were refashioned from the original studio recordings, comes a further set of makeovers at the hands of assorted desk jockeys and remixers, all of whom seem grimly determined to reveal aspects of the man's music never heard before.

On "Shhh (SEA4 Miles Remix)", King Britt and Philip Charles go for a 'digital-lite' effect, stranding a mournful Davis amid a featureless overflow of electronic sounds, none of which matches in any respect the extreme sensitivity of his solo trumpet. Doc Scott holds the attention by getting down and dirty with "Rated X", while French DJ Cam's clumsy HipHop take on "In A Silent Way" remains a flat and numbing experience throughout.

The longest track is reserved for Laswell himself, who takes more than 16 minutes to do nothing very much all over again to "On The Corner". The track gives way to a second roughing up of "Rated X", this time beneath the boots of Jamie Myerson's strident Junglist beats. By far the strongest cut, but somewhat bafflingly available on vinyl only, is DJ Krush's sleek and sensitive retooling of "Black Satin/On The Corner", which oozes sci-fi sass and Japanese know-how. Overall, however, *Panthalassa: The Remixes* remains more a work of idle speculation than a radical reinterpretation of a major 20th century musician's recorded legacy.

For his own Davis 'tribute', Hollywood



Holger Czukay
Good Morning Story
TONE CASUALTIES TCCD9944 CD

Despite his many landmark achievements, Holger Czukay has never really inspired the same reverence as other musical innovators of his generation. As a student of Stockhausen in the mid-60s, he was fully plugged into Cologne's thriving electronic music community, yet the achievement of his 1968 solo project *Canaxis* (recorded with engineer Rolf Dammers) has been to some extent overshadowed by Can's enormous reputation. From today's perspective, however, you could argue that the Can years were a hiatus in Czukay's career, disrupting the continuity from *Canaxis*'s experimental montages of Western and non-European sound sources, to the cinematic cut-ups and splicing of later solo works like 1979's *Movies* and the hard disk constructions of his latest album, *Good Morning Story*.

Of course, technological developments have long since done away with the laborious hours of tape splicing that produced *Canaxis* and *Movies*, but his solo works have always been marked by a hands-on physicality, and *Good Morning Story* is no exception. Shunning samplers and sequencers, Czukay cut and pasted his sound materials direct to hard disk — and the result is a kind of seamless digital sculpture

Czukay being Czukay, of course, there's no chance of this methodology producing anything austere or forbidding. His perpetual readiness to leaven the seriousness of his explorations with humour is perhaps another reason why his solo work doesn't enjoy the same prestige as Can. Well, Czukay's distinctively Germanic sense of fun can appear laboured at times, but his deceptively rich and fluid music is certainly worth the effort of listening through his jokes, even if you have to grit your teeth. The opening track, "Invisible Man", is a case in point. Over a typically taut Jaki Liebezeit/Jah Wobble dub groove, Czukay delivers, in his avuncular and eccentric tone, a jump-cut short story. It seems entirely inconsequential until you notice how his fluent editing opens and snaps shut sonic spaces with a strangely delicate abruptness, alternately trapping and releasing the whiskery tones of an unadorned trumpet mouthpiece. Meanwhile, the silvery voice of U-She — Czukay's wife and muse — guides it towards a fusion of European pop and reggae that is every bit as assured as Serge Gainsbourg's similarly orientated *Aux Armes Etcetera*.

The title track is another cut-and-paste narrative, with voices entering and receding at all points of the stereo spectrum. This time it points to the neue Hörspiel tradition of radio drama that, since the mid-60s, has been assiduously blurring the distinction between broadcast drama and sound art in Germany. Both on this track and "Dancing In Wild Circles", Czukay reclaims part of the Can legacy as his own by making free with the bass and drum pattern from Can's "Vitamin C" (from *Ege Bamyasi*). Firstly, he speeds up the rhythm to generate a breathless momentum, and then he slots into it a wild array of sound effects — clocks, birdsong, metallic percussion — with the casual aplomb of a master sound editor

But it's the 22 minute closing track, "Mirage", that really takes root in the imagination. On to a warm, sweeping Arabic motif wrapped around a breathy organ drone, Czukay applies tonal colours and textures like acrylics. Tremulous violins, the whirr of rewinding tape, distant sirens and horns blur and separate as they hover in soft strata above the core drone, before the piece subsides into a murmuring string orchestra coda. The skilful way Czukay constructs so evocative a musical narrative, which doesn't so much resolve itself as finally dissolve in the listener's ear, makes a powerful case for his continued relevance.

CHRIS SHARP

composer and trumpeter Mark Isham contents himself with picking up his Harmon mute and pressing down on the wah-wah pedal in a spirit of fond recollection rather than freebooting experimentalism. Recorded live over three weekends at the Baked Potato in Los Angeles, his Miles selection ultimately loses itself in its own reverence. Backed by guitarists Pater Maunu and Steve Cardena, bassist Doug Lunn and Michael Barsimato on drums, Isham's approach is relaxed and thoughtful, if a little uninspired. The opening track, "In A Silent Way — Milestones" adopts a properly respectful and pensive tone. It carries over into two of Isham's own compositions, "Internet" and "Azeal", which blur in painlessly with the Davis material

For the most part, however, the quality of playing provokes the occasional flicker of interest, and the post-recording studio tweaking is easy on the ear. Things only go seriously awry when the two guitarists start to get a little too frisky. A stately cover version of "Spanish Key" descends into the aimless, choppy twittering of fretboards, while "Great Expectations" strikes moody guitar hero poses, and "Black Satin" is filled with furious soloing and self-conscious pedal work.

As with Laswell's *Panthalassa* remixes, Mark Isham's Miles Davis project remains a rather pointless exercise, an intricate musical sideshow routine involving memories, samples and studio technique but expressing very little innovatory zeal. Well, that's show business for you: always pushing the wrong buttons. A recent poster campaign for Apple computers featured an intense Miles Davis dreamily clutching his trumpet over a sales pitch that read "Think Different". And they say irony is an outmoded concept

KEN HOLLINGS

Bill Frisell
Good Dog, Happy Man
NONESUCH 795362 CD

Guitarist Bill Frisell continues to frustrate efforts at critical pigeonholing. His unique mix of jazz, Country, blues and Americana results here in a deceptive minimalism. Mostly laidback, mellow and quietly lyrical, there persists the feeling that all is not quite as it seems. A solid, reassuring backbeat masks the subtle, intelligent drumming of Jim Keltner. Viktor Krauss is unobtrusive on bass, but then so is everyone else

A shimmering, gossamer quality is the most distinctive of Frisell's guitar stylings. But here the quality of elusiveness and indirect statement is taken up by the entire group, quietly insistent backbeat included. On this disc, there is virtually nothing that counts as a straight solo. Greg Leisz's steel guitar always seems intertwined in counterpoint with the leader's electric and acoustic instruments, with Wayne Horvitz's organ shadings quietly commenting

All compositions are by Frisell, except the traditional "Shenandoah", where Ry Cooder's guest appearance raises the disc's commercial potential. But they mostly have a traditional feel. The long, plangent "My Buffalo Girl" sustains with only slight fluctuations in intensity. "Cold, Cold Ground" is eerie and mournful, but does eventually work up a little sweat, while the bluesy "Cadillac 1959" is untypically muscular and edgy. "Poem For Eva", the closing track, is pretty without being saccharine

Despite its dominant Country feel, the album connects with the kind of minimalism found on a fine, little-noticed 1997 jazz album, *Down Home*, under the leadership of drummer Joey Baron, where Frisell and saxophonist Arthur Blythe proved surprisingly compatible. On *Good Dog*, Frisell's jazz roots are revealed in the hints of harmonic complexity, and the delicacy of the guitarist's touch. This strange and beautiful album might broaden his appeal but it remains beyond category

ANDY HAMILTON

The Ghost Orchid
An Introduction To Electronic Voice Phenomena
ASH INTERNATIONAL (RIP) PARC1 CD

Compiled, edited and produced by Justin Chatburn and Ash International's Mike Harding, this massive tape archive, property of an organisation called the Parapsychic Acoustic Research Cooperative, is designed to bring the curious up to speed on the weird and vexing issues of ghost voices, disembodied speech and alien verbal communication. Using a high frequency radio receiver, some simple recording equipment and enough patient determination, it is possible to get in touch with a plethora of mysterious entities who, in time, will not only speak directly to you but also offer oblique sometimes threatening comments about your current circumstances. Whether benign or just plain evil, these beings have exercised the minds and patience of several researchers over the years, most notably Constantine

Raudive whose 7" vinyl recording of spirit messages from the likes of Spanish philosopher Ortega Y Gasset and Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky was originally released in 1971 and is now available for the first time here in digital form

Most of this amazing collection, however is derived from the painstaking efforts of Raymond Cass who has managed, over the years, to coax from the ether such dense spectral patter as *"Put it on ice and I'll mend your feet" "Elvis"* and *"Not enough there to copy"*

The polyglot wordplay as the mysterious voices switch from English to German Latvian and Russian during a single utterance has a raw phonetic appeal, however puzzling their origins might be Are they speaking from beyond the grave, the far reaches of the galaxy or some cosmic dimension as yet undiscovered on this fleshly plain? Who can say? But it sure is fun to listen in

KEN HOLLINGS

Hanayo In Panacea

Hanayo In Panacea

MILLE PLATEAUX MP56 CD

Panacea s recordings for Position Chrome explore a virulently militant take on heavy duty drum n' bass which he helpfully describes as 'Industrial Hatecore Terrorstep But Mathis Mootz is no one-dimensional noise merchant — he's a former chorister with a rigorous background in classical music who also records sex-drenched lo-fi funk under the name Bad Street Boy Singer Hanayo has an even more eclectic CV taking in formal geisha training acting photography collaborations with Merzbow and Violent Onsen Geisha, and pop success as a Japanese version of Vanessa Paradis Their unlikely collaboration on *Hanayo In Panacea* brings together this dizzy cocktail of influences synthesizing them into an uneasy, vibrant strange and triumphant collection that is almost but not quite pop music

Deranged white noise laps constantly around the record destabilising the songs and imbuing them with risk But it rarely engulfs them Noise fiends will welcome the opening "I Am Tamagotchi" and the scalding "Monster Zungen", where Panacea lets rip near-Gabba bpms and dysfunctional swathes of distortion that almost obliterate Hanayo s piercing vocals However, the rest of the album is less straightforward and altogether more interesting

The heavily armoured mid-tempo breakbeats of "You Hungry Man" bind shimmering and squelching chords to sensual, breathy singing, and "Pelo Pelo" is a similarly playful amalgamation of the tactile the accessible and the aggressive — a minimal, poppy chant animated by brittle sparks of funk guitar and whirring synth-stabs reminiscent of The Normal s "Warm Leatherette" Elsewhere, Panacea's love of early rave and Acid House shows through — "Danger" is a bristling 303 freakout, Acid patterns running wild around a one finger keyboard melody and juddering percussion, while the warm sweeps and agile beats of "A Million Lightyears revisits crowdpleasers like Prodigy s "Weather Experience' or Damon Wild s "Lazer Worshippers Theme"

The most intriguing hybrid of all comes halfway through when Panacea reveals his roots by offering an arrangement of Bach's cantata "Ich Steh' An Deiner Krippen Hier" It places Hanayo's ineffably sweet vocal at the heart of a droning post-apocalyptic soundscape buffeted high and low by vast submerged glacial beats and drifting clouds of radiation

CHRIS SHARP

Jon Hassell

Fascinoma

WATER LILY ACOUSTICS WLACS70 CD

Going to extremes can be a bit like time travel there s always the danger that you might bump into yourself on the way back Take Jon Hassell for example A trumpeter of no small technical resources, he has made use of harmonizers and related gizmos over the past two decades to transform his fluid playing into intricately digitised slivers of sound His unmistakable style has been a familiar part of the sonic landscape since the early 80s reverberating like a cybertronic prayer call through some thoughtful collaborations with Brian Eno and Peter Gabriel or even whipping up a storm on the Talking Heads track, "Houses In Motion" Well that s all over with now Hassell has dumped digital and gone analogue with a fervour that makes Paul s conversion on the road to Damascus look about as meaningful and intense as the Pepsi Challenge

His latest release "done with custom-built vacuum-tube electronics", was produced by Ry Cooder to whom Hassell expresses his gratitude in the form of a reworked version of the 23rd Psalm "Ry has been been my shepherd " Hassell enthuses in a poem printed on the sleeve ' I shall not want He maketh me to lay down the Harmonizer and my coat of too-many colours " From Magic Band member to quasi-Biblical divinity in a little over 30 years hey we always knew you could do it Ry baby

The result, however is a performance so featureless and restrained that it exists purely as an ambient space This is not music to be listened to it's for overhearing The fact that Cooder was responsible for making the first ever digitally recorded album seems the palest of ironies by comparison

Hassell makes only slightly less fuss over the fact that he has elected, for the first time in ages, to cover other composers material It's unfortunate therefore, that he should choose to demonstrate his skills as an arranger on two songs which Esquivel included on his first groundbreaking American LP, *Other Worlds Other Sounds*, back in 1958 Both standards in their own fashion, Esquivel transformed "Nature Boy" and "Poinciana" into vast expanses of dense orchestration that teetered on the edge of electronic tonality Think Varese moonlighting in a strip club and you re just about there Hassell however, blends his untreated trumpet with Ronu Majumbar's Indian flute and Jacky Terrasson's piano in such coolly reticent arrangements that they almost cease to exist "Poinciana", in particular is reduced to a mood rather than a tune The playing stays on this one restrained level throughout, even when Hassell leads his ensemble through group compositions featuring Cooder on guitar fills that are so polite they're almost diffident and Joachim Cooder on introspective drums plus additional rhythmic patterning from Rick Masterson and Rose Okada on tamburas Tempo and sonorities are kept strictly unvaried, dynamics remain unexplored

The title for this act of collective withdrawal, *Fascinoma*, is derived from a term used by doctors and researchers to describe "anything weird enough to be frankly fascinating" in this case it must refer to the recording equipment and microphone arrangements which are listed in obsessive detail Hassell also describes how the entire session has been converted to digital for its final release Just what the world needs right now an album that reissues itself in digitally remastered form before it has even come out

KEN HOLLINGS

Salif Keita

Papa

METRO BLUE 724349907027 CD

Papa, Salif Keita's first album for the Blue Note subsidiary Metro Blue, is a fine example of urban African pop drawing strength from a cosmopolitan musical sensibility In lesser hands this might have lead to dilution but Keita is a remarkable musician an accomplished guitarist with a confident soaring voice and his songs on this CD are especially strong

One measure of its success is that although the recording sessions occurred in Mali, New York and Paris, there are no evident faultlines Instrumentation differed with location, but the production by Keita and Vernon Reid, with assistance from Souleymane Doumbia and Eric Bono fuses the results into a seamless flow of high quality performances skilfully arranged

The Malian ensemble includes the magnificent kora player Toumani Diabate Organist John Medeski is among those assembled for the American session, which features a surprising, yet entirely appropriate vocal contribution from Grace Jones on "Tolon Willie (The Party Is On)" The album's mood varies from buoyant funk that celebrates communal dancing to plaintive ballads commemorating lost friends Keita crafts his singing to fit the requirements of both extremes and whatever lies between Listening to the lament "Tomorrow (Sadio)'

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David Toop
Architettura Volume Three: Museum Of Fruit
CAIPIRINHA MUSIC CAI2022 CD

David Toop
Hot Pants Idol
BARDONI BAR020 CD

Not one of Toop's metaphors for music, the Museum of Fruit is actually that — a museum dedicated to fruit, within sight of Mount Fuji in Japan, designed by Itsuko Hasegawa. Third in Caipirinha's 'Architettura' series twinning buildings and musics, Toop originally had his eye on the Eurostar extension at Waterloo but was beaten to it by Tetsu Inoue. Still, the museum's concept chimes well with Toop's interests.

In a trans-century echo of Ernst Haeckel, who began publishing lithographic plates of plants and marine life as *Art Forms In Nature* in 1899, Hasegawa's building suggested to Toop forms such as molluscs and seed pods. His electroacoustic atmospheres likewise segue organic and inorganic sound sources so that you can't tell where bamboo flute ends and digital loop begins. A reverberant immersive drone, somewhere between Thomas Köner and Jon Hassell, builds up into a blurred multitonal rumble, leaning on raga pitches, and suffused with electric cicadas and sharp guitar whines, like a Taoist Eric Clapton. "Glass For Paper" weaves together bleating freeform tones, miniature sirens and scrapings of percussion and bowed cymbals into a semi-hypnotic but unpredictable pool of echoes and repetitions.

Toop's Ambient fusion of ethnic and hi-tech sonorities produces a music of dislocation and oceanic drift. But then his concentration on reverberating textures underlines another sense of the oceanic — the actual soundwaves which, however hallucinatory the music, record concrete traces of events, such as Michael Prime's electric recordings sourced from fruits, that Toop builds into miniature tracks between the longer takes. Toop comments that his music seeks to suggest "'an entirely new kind of nature' — that encloses the listener in an invisible, impermanent environment" and that "in its way, this is a kind of architecture".

On this front, track titles such as "A Second Nature" and "Utopia In Fiction Form" recall the writings of 30s intellectual Walter Benjamin on fin de siècle commodity phantasmagorias on display in Parisian arcades, and it seems that records are for Toop what consumer objects were for Benjamin — traces left by historically buried desires, dismembered from their context and set free to circulate round the vortex of individual fantasies. Like Benjamin, Toop describes the theme of his latest book, *Exotica*, as "the art of ruins". *Hot Pants Idol* is derived from the fictional narratives Toop wove into that book, an apocalyptic, ersatz travelogue that evokes the blended fantasies of Arthur Rimbaud and JG Ballard, William Burroughs, Angela Carter and the spiritworlds of Ben Okri. Reminiscent also of Beat-era dream diaries, it eschews the linearity of life on the road for a global melting pot of past and future fictions in which animal and machine, mythic and modern, enter into arcane correspondences, exotic snapshots for a pseudo-anthropologist of the future: "Pornographic raconteurs delivered circadian monologues. In disconnected fragments they described colourful incidents of bestiality, torture, exotic auto-erotic devices, industrial accidents, histories of dismemberment and cannibalism."

Toop narrates his texts in a measured, low-toned whisper — more a pallid reproduction of Brando's Captain Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now* than the husk left by experience; the voice trails, half-absorbed, over the music, which comes from an eclectic roster of musicians including Bill Laswell, Paul Schutze, John Oswald and Talvin Singh. It's a tribute to Toop's electroacoustic alchemy that so many of the artists here provide tracks that sound like Toop: absorbent depths taking on rippling ethno-acoustic sonorities. Laswell opens with the sounds of birds and cicadas, a faint drone-like hum and gamelan chimes, and as this track blends into Schütze and then Hassell you won't really notice the change. Resonance is the key. Everything appears as part of a holistic web of responses, a segueing of exotic phrases into a decadent phantasmagoria.

Later tracks are more differentiated. Russell Mills's rock-influenced dub; John Oswald's lush orchestral 'scapes, Wu-Tang influenced atmospherics and bass beats from Witchman; and Tom Recchion's muted orchestral lounge music — all variously backing Toop's narration of a Ballard-style fantasy of Californian swimming pools and pneumatic models from Martin Denny album covers. The lisping murmur gets more self-indulgently voyeuristic here.

Unlike Benjamin, Toop is prepared to cut loose in the realm of his own exotic fabula, even as his written work tries to unscramble lost histories. "The paradox of an imperial paradise liberated from colonial intervention, a golden age recreated through the lurid colours of a cocktail glass." It remains paradoxical, though Toop does well to resist the drift into pure amusement, keeping the references active, even if, as history slips away into the mirage of exoticism, Toop's voice seems weakly impelled to surf his own fantasies.

MATT FFYTCHE

where Kerta adds pleading urgency to a melancholy concoction of cello, kora and bass, it is easy to understand why his erstwhile collaborator Joe Zawinul has described him as "one of the greatest voices in the world".

JULIAN COWLEY

Khan
1-900 GET-KHAN
MATADOR OLE345 CD/LP

My other half walked in while I was playing this album. "Is that music you're supposed to want to shag to?" he asked. Indeed it is, although the fact that he then went off to do the washing up doesn't suggest it performs that function terribly effectively. It becomes a fascinating record, however, if you treat it as a kind of documentary about eroticism rather than a sexual stimulant in itself.

Khan, the latest alias of DJ/producer/entrepreneur Can Oral (please supply your own jokes) claims the album is a protest against the increasing police and judicial clampdowns on New York's sex industry. So the sleeve is full of ads for male prostitutes (who paid the record company for the advertising space), the title is styled like the number of a sex phoneline, and many of the tracks have implicit or explicit sexual connotations. Khan keeps most of them at what might be called a copulatory tempo, and is especially fond of big, squelchy, sleazy beats that hover somewhere between 80s Electro — "Jet Lounge Blues" lives in a damp cellar somewhere near Grace Jones's "Nightclubbing" — and a woozily computerised refraction of glam rock. "Broken English" is the sound of Jimi Tenor reforming The Glitter Band.

The album deals in atmospheres rather than narratives — it's a soundtrack for late-night prowlings and morning-after comedowns. Julee Cruise (another not inappropriate surname) sings on and co-writes two tracks, but they're the least interesting, since Khan's real expertise lies not in songs but in moods, making this an intriguing attempt at political intervention through primarily instrumental music. There's a welcome sense of humour here that prevents any Jimmy Somerville-style earnestness setting in, jokes that range from the sampling of a hilariously perfunctory porn phoneline to camp borrowings of other musical genres. "Time's A Vice" for example, seems to have pinched that phased, pulsing noise from the start of The Supremes "Reflections", while elsewhere loungecore melodies flutter their eyelashes at blaxploitation themes.

Never one to avoid offence, Khan has said he wants this album to "bring flesh and passion to a frigid electronic scene". The monastic aesthetic of so many 'serious' electronica artists seems blinkered when set

PHOTO: GERT DU RUYTER

against Khan's flawed but human attempt to put some filth, fun and social awareness onto the electronic agenda

ANDY MEDHURST

King Crimson

Cirkus The Young Persons' Guide To King Crimson Live

VIRGIN CDVKCD12 2XCD

Few groups polarise critical opinion like King Crimson This British experimental rock outfit, formed in 1969, are either loved or loathed, revered or reviled In the court of King Crimson, there are no in-betweens As their founder/leader/guitarist Robert Fripp says, KC are both "immensely popular and immensely unpopular" Elsewhere in his perceptive commentaries on the computer enhanced section of disc one, he rightly draws attention to the inappropriateness of the critics' persistent lumping of King Crimson in with other 70s Progressive rockers like ELP, Genesis and Yes, who had little in common with his group Unlike virtually all Prog groups, who were concerned to replicate studio arrangements at gigs, KC saw live performance as an opportunity to heavily rework existing material, or to explore non-idiomatic free improvisation — as opposed to the repetitive blues-based jamming of most of their contemporaries In fact, for sheer stylistic diversity and ambitious musicianship, the 7Ds King Crimson line-ups have more in common with The Mothers Of Invention and other Zappa ensembles, than with grandiose UK Progsters Likewise, it's time Fripp's innovative guitar playing was seen as part of an eclectic avant garde tradition inhabited by the likes of Fred Frith, Henry Kaiser, Hans Reichel, Nick Didkovsky and Stephan Wittwer rather than as an expression of the Prog guitar hero' mentality

Cirkus is intended as a 3Dth birthday celebration of live King Crimson through the ages, from the late 60s to the 9Ds double trio line-up and the recent 'fractalisation' of KC into sub-groups Although the material selected adequately reflects its various incarnations, those devotees who already have *The Great Deceiver*, *Epitaph*, *The Night Watch* and *Absent Lovers* won't be doing much celebrating Moreover, most of the previously unissued material comes from the 'official bootleg' *B Boom* The only previously unreleased treats are a 1972 "Schizoid Man", which features startling free jazz saxophony from Mel Collins, and a short abstract improvisation called "Besancon", invisibly stitched on to the front end of a chronologically earlier track, called "The Talking Drum' In all a rather lacklustre offering from Virgin to the many longserving 'Crimheads' There's always the possibility that Fripp is keeping back his most exciting unreleased material for his own DGM label He plans to release a Bremen 1972 recording that features the inimitable percussionist/junk manipulator Jamie Muir, but sadly it will only be available to members of the DGM Collectors' Club

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Steve Lacy Trio

The Rent

CAVITY SEARCH CSR44 2XCD

The Rent is an unexpurgated account of soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy's return, during an extensive North American tour in 1997, to the same Oregon church where he had previously recorded the solo CD *Actuality* It is evidently a sympathetic venue, and local label Cavity Search have done well enough in the production and engineering of these discs to offset any carping about Lacy revisiting an already thoroughly well-documented songbook of originals, plus the inevitable Thelonious Monk composition, "Shuffle-Boil"

In comparison with his peers, Lacy seems humbly, almost uniquely self-effacing The notes accompanying this set describe his habit of associating each new composition with a dedicatee, whose picture he adds to the sheet music, sometimes as part of a collage The music is thereafter *about* someone other than its author In contrast, the music of Lacy's peers among them Evan Parker and David S Ware seems to be about very little beyond obsessive self-identification with a particular process or conceptual extrapolation *The Rent* is dedicated to the late French jazz critic Laurent Goddet, who helped Lacy relocate from Rome to Paris in 197D, and the awful lateral punning of the title should not obscure the apparent anguish caused by the loss of his friend The title tune by turns light hearted and despairing, captures, movingly and without sentiment, the melancholy of this friendship cut short by suicide But that mood does not weigh heavily overall Lacy — above all a superb melodicist — is peerless in his ability to graft new jazz hybrids He is also deceptively respectful of the tradition, combining echoes of Dixieland with an almost steely modernity For latecomers, this set is a fine introduction to his work

TIM DWEN

'The Martian' & Various Artists

LBH 6251876 A Red Planet Compilation

RED PLANET RP10 CD

"The spirit of the people is greater than man's technology," pronounces Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver in the sample opening "Last Transmission From Earth", which sets the tone for this welcome compilation of material from the most mysterious and widely debated of Underground Resistance's side projects

The nine EPs released by Red Planet since its inception in 1992 have included contributions from Model SDD, Eddie Fowlkes and Drexciya, alongside chief producer 'The Martian', who is widely believed to be UR's Mike Banks himself, but is here credited as the hitherto unknown Will Thomas The intention seems to be to erase auteurist traces from the music Former colleague Jeff Mills was after something similar on his *Waveform Transmission* LPs, on which he sought "to make you think the track already existed and you just tuned into it"

The sleevenotes hint at a mythology of Lovecraftian intricacy, describing how life on Mars was converted to psychic invisibility to protect itself from the excesses of humanity It is not so much *War Of The Worlds II* as Ray Bradbury's Red Planet where human beings are the invaders as well as the agents of discord and violence

This civilisation's ideas of advancement are based on thought and dreams rather than material technology It's not difficult to see an analogy here for Mike Banks s reverence for his Native American ancestry particularly when the disc contains tracks like "Windwalker" or "Ghostdancer" The latter takes its name from the Native American religious cult of the 1B70s, for whom dancing was a means of contacting dead ancestors It was revived in the 1B9Ds in the hope of summoning the cataclysm that would consume the white interlopers but it ended in the massacre at Wounded Knee

Mostly the music corresponds to this ambiguity The mournful choral melody of "Skypainter" sweeps through the track like a lament for a lost civilisation Alternately, it evokes a solar wind blowing across Mars s blasted landscape Despite House s rhetoric of unity and togetherness here it has the capacity to sound utterly desolate But there are also moments of great celebration On the uplifting "Stardancer" a simple bass pulse is chased by a glorious flanged synth vapour It is the Apolionian counterpoint to the Satanic "Death Star" — the magnum opus of UR s often fear-inducing early work

Rarely has Techno sounded so exquisitely well-rounded as on this compilation Often the music has more in common with Isaac Hayes's lush arrangements, or even jazz rock, than the marrow-cooling sparseness of a Basic Channel production The zenith of the series is "Firekeeper" — possibly a reference to the Native American 'fireholders' who read the dreams of their tribes A looping orchestral sample, which swirls round the dusty craters of the Red Planet's surface, ushers in a drumbeat sounding like a mutant insect army on the march

A veritable call to arms, it again raises the question of militancy surrounding UR Does *Red Planet* represent their last revolutionary outpost — a virtual Sierra Maestra where their interstellar fugitives can regroup for a final push against the programmers? Second-guessing UR is futile By refusing to expound on precise meanings, The Martian retains control of his cultural capital And in a world where politics in pop usually reverts to an expedient, profitable 'fighting the system from

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See listings — July acts include Fat Cat, Lo Recordings, Italic (Cologne), Soul Static Sound

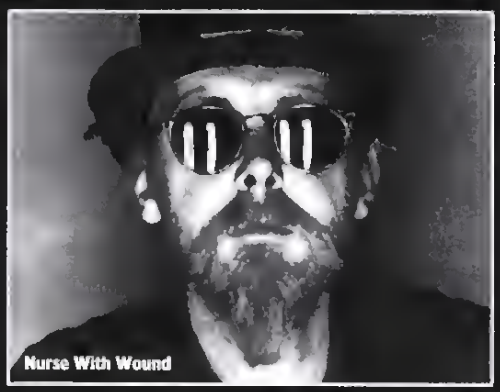
the SPRAWL

Nurse With Wound
An Awkward Pause
UNITED DAIRIES UD056 CD

The dilemma with the so-called Industrial avant garde — almost its defining 'difficulty', maybe — is that while a lot of it is intriguing conceptually, fully realised aesthetically, it can be depressingly unfulfilling to listen to. Exhausted by its reluctance to provide aural pleasures, surely even the most committed of curiosity seekers can be switched off by its frequent dependence on sonic touchstones which, these days, are easily accessed in other musical climes. If you want monolithic, faceless rhythms, they were annexed by dance music long ago. You need jags of noise? Find them institutionalised in Metal or enlivened by free Improv. We start from the position that anything goes as music, for sure, but beyond dry virtues more readily claimed by academia, where's the high?

So to Nurse With Wound, who with 20 years of work behind them, are still reinventing the wheel on which the butterfly of music can be broken. I hear talk that some fans — does that word even apply here? — are disgruntled by track two, "Two Shaves And A Shine", a "concerto for bouzouki and three piece rock group", which is arguably as close as they have ever come to appropriating Judas Priest's territory. This is a Metal hoedown as imagined in some kind of doleful nightmare, though. Besides, it sets the listener up nicely for the epic centrepiece of the album, "The Penis Fruit Loop". Another of Steven Stapleton's misbegotten histories of music, it starts in a crawling electronic burr, flecked by organ improvisations and some robot character's ruminations, before it disperses into carefully ordered chaos.

What Stapleton took from the free music he spent his adolescence listening to was its real-time juice and in-your-face presence on vinyl. Considering how NWW is such a


Nurse With Wound

finely carpentered, studiobound vehicle, it's amazing how livid and palpable the sounds on this record are. When generators hum, they do so with such force — and you don't even need to play it loud to feel it — that they judder your bones. The inspired amateurism that made *Chance Meeting*... so invigorating two decades ago persists in the way Stapleton and his select team of cronies piece these unforgettable melanges together. "Lunar Cement Sidewalk" and the almost transcendental "Mummer's Little Weeper" still sound fresh and new, but worn in by the work experience these guys have already put in.

It is tempting to say that NWW have grown gentler and less intransigent, but since more than one person has already been driven from the room by an audition of "The Penis Fruit Loop", such matters are relative, and probably irrelevant. Where Stapleton succeeds most powerfully is in his creation of music that satisfies the cerebrum in its motivations, yet sends enough voltage to the pleasure centres to actually make you want to hear it again. Another great Nurse With Wound record, in fact.

RICHARD COOK

within formula, UR have set up their own production and distribution structures.

As for the music on *Red Planet*, there will be bigger Techno LPs this year. But none will be as emotionally uplifting and soulful. Space is the place. Mars is the destination.

MIKE SHALLCROSS

Masada
Live In Jerusalem 1994
TZADIK TZ7322 2XCD

Masada
Live In Taipei 1995
TZADIK TZ7323 2XCD

John Zorn announced that the tenth studio disc by his Masada quartet, recorded in 1997 and released last year, was to be the last. Evidently his proclamation wasn't meant to include live releases. That's good news for anyone yet to start a Masada collection. For in the studio, Masada concentrated on getting Zorn's modal compositions down accurately, but onstage they grew into one hell of a jazz group.

They are clearly awed by each other's gifts. Out to impress each other, Masada would draw on the extended techniques of Zorn's earlier work (blorks of sound, blistering squeals, arrangements splayed open like a dissected bird) and on 60 years of jazz and Improv history. Their physical and musical rapport is a delight — few groups so clearly love to play together. Just as importantly, they have learned to adjust their playing to a venue's acoustics, not to mention its audience and its historical associations.

The Jerusalem album was recorded during Masada's first visit to the Holy City. It captures them on their best behaviour, tight and boppy with Zorn and trumpeter Dave Douglas trading off solos and blurts cheerfully and politely. Even demon drummer Joey Baron manages to restrain himself to a lithe swing for most of the set. Still, a few pieces anticipate the collective gusto they developed later on — on the Jewish soul-jazz fantasia 'Peliyot', for instance, Douglas and Zorn work up a roaring duet.

On the poor sounding *Live In Taipei*, the trashcan acoustics of the venue eat up Greg Cohen's bass tone almost altogether, and Douglas often sounds like he's playing halfway across the room from the mic. But it doesn't matter when the performance is this ravenous and intense. About three minutes into the opening "Gevurah", the quartet realises what they're up against, soundwise, and from then on they're flying. 'Mikreh' turns into a hurtling samba. "Yoreh" is all quiet reserve, a single loop of horn or rattle of cymbals at a time, full of deep breathing subtleties. In the four pieces common to both albums you can hear just how varied Masada's playing can get. On the Jerusalem set, "Lachich" is an incantation breathing high seriousness even through the squeaks of its improv section. In Taipei, the same piece is ballistic, almost hardcore, with Zorn and Douglas fracturing the piece into shared breaths, then diving in and blowing for their lives. Jerusalem's "Ziphim" is focused on Cohen and Baron's percolating Latin groove on the same piece at the end of the Taipei album, all four of them tear into it together, hauling each other over the top for ten howling minutes.

DOUGLAS WOLK

PHOTO DEAN BELCHER

Kaffe Matthews
cl cecile
ROSETTE WORKS AA

These striking sonic disturbances from Kaffe Matthews were recorded in London, Chicago and Oslo. Place matters, of course. As does the time — real-time, an article of faith in her work, which is about exploring the situated moment. The specifications of the event are unknowable to the armchair listener, as very little is carried over to the recording but the aura. Yet it works. Matthews's strategically placed mics pick up stray bits of sound, which are mixed in with her treated violin. Noise is funnelled into spectacular shapes, with almost every source sound quickly processed beyond recognition (there is less discernible violin here than in the past).

The first piece, recorded in London, is a tremendous stretch of aural sandpaper, a spool of scratched and fuzzy noises with ghostly tones occasionally discernible in the background. Though she foregrounds her violin playing for a brief coda, it comes only after she has violently chopped up and twisted her phrases.

The Chicago piece begins with treated bits of conversation. Almost immediately the clicks and sibilants of speech are whirled into a vortex of lowering sound, with Matthews tossing in loops for good measure. Again, it is robust and hard-edged. Slowly a rich sound sculpture emerges, passing through sharply characterised episodes — in one particularly great moment, the piece morphs into Techno-inflected bumping. Perhaps her looping makes this one so approachable. Regardless, the roughness of some of her sounds doesn't preclude them congealing into a deeply satisfying peripheral rhythm. It's particularly noticeable in the Oslo piece, where a dreamy pulse is set alongside more eccentric patterns.

Matthews's music suggests an inexhaustible range of sound, channelled with an apparently unerring — or should that read a productively erring? — touch. The choices she makes about, say, timbre and loop duration keep her multiplying possibilities just within check. A snatch of sound becomes a Pandora's box in seconds, yet the CD never sounds like a randomly tossed noise salad. Moment by full moment, it's a thrill from beginning to end.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Merzbow
Door Open At 8am
ALIEN8 ALIENCD17 CD

Door Open At 8am is billed as Masami Akita's "homage to free jazz", and it's a measure of Merzbow's track record that this makes it sound like a less forbidding proposition than his other work. The coruscating blast of the opening 'Intro' pulls no sonic punches however. Its seething stew of white noise just conceivably nods in the direction of Borbetomagus, otherwise it has little obvious link with, say, Ornette Coleman. Elsewhere, the

affinity is a little clearer — *Door Open At 8am* sees Merzbow eschewing the endurance tests of yore in favour of a more measured exploration of noise dynamics. This time round he defines his thickening skeins of distorted electronics against patches of silence. Paradoxically, the disc's spacious interludes make it a more genuinely three-dimensional recording than forbidding monolithic slabs like *Noizhead* or *Akasha Gulva*. 'Lyons Wake" uses dub techniques to punch silences into the noise, with reverb to the fore, as Akita filters and phases its evanescent squalls.

Door Open At 8am also reveals Merzbow's previously unexplored interest in rhythm — 'Tony Williams Oeathspace" namechecks a fusion pioneer, but mocks his florid, virtuoso approach with an ultra-primitive triple beat drum pattern wrapped in a slowly gathering insectoid noiseswarm. Elsewhere, the free jazz influence is made explicit with some sampled snatches of drumming, and in 'Jimmy Elvins In Traffic" fumbling double bass pulses.

The album's centrepiece is the 20 minute "Africa Brass Session Volume 2", which bears no discernible resemblance to the John Coltrane album it is named after. Launching fizzing skyrockets from a sober bass pulse, it gradually strengthens into a full-on barrage that leaves the brain scrambling for footholds. Like all Merzbow records, *Door Open At 8am* is about textural manipulation. What distinguishes this one from the rest are its relatively unguarded ports of entry, through which Merzbow beckons the unconverted.

CHRIS SHARP

Oval

Szenarıodisk

THRILL JOCKEY THRILL064 CD

Markus Popp's Oval project will probably never quite escape the notoriety of his early experiments with savaged, skipping CDs on records like *Systemisch* and the unsurpassed *94 Diskont*. Following the latter's release and a small number of terse public statements, he seemed to disappear, with only the occasional rumour of a forthcoming software release or collaborative projects such as Microstoria's *_snd* and the record of altered bells, *Dok*, to mark his passing. You could be forgiven for thinking he'd gone into hiding from American noisenik Kid-606, whose memorably titled breakbeat shitstorm "Markus Popp Can Kiss My Redneck Ass" at least proved he'd not gone unnoticed. In fact, he's been releasing records regularly only in the self-sufficient GAS territories (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). He has also produced video documentaries in Japan, and worked on patenting a box of sonic tricks, to be released as a dedicated piece of hardware entitled Process.

But with no completion date for Process in sight, the tracks collected on *Szenarıodisk* will have to suffice. Collected from two 12" EPs released during 1998, *Aero Deko* and *Szenario*, with five short added tracks interleaved between them, *Szenarıodisk* charts Popp's development of a multi-tiered, fleshy architecture that's less explicitly about exploiting mistakes, and more concerned with finding the point where control yields to the programmed life of his soundfiles. Software requires the cultivator's hand rather than the controlling fist, and Popp is playing a curling match here: the vibrations travel, and his job is to sweep away at the oncoming object's path, moving the ground under the noise as it slides.

Popp has always been far more interested in process than final form and arrangement, so there's no ceremony in the way these pieces begin and end. They are simply switched on with their many textural tissues already quivering. Brian Eno once suggested that in the future, making art would be akin to creating an imaginary world and inviting visitors to try it. In Oval's new world, you may want to outstay your welcome.

ROB YOUNG

Zeena Parkins & Ana Maria Simo

The Opium War

EINSTEIN 010 CD

Described in brief, this tale of drug dealing Cubans, high society hopheads and horseflesh butchers, set in Manhattan at the beginning of the century and presented here as a 'radio play for voices, sounds and music', appears considerably more fun than it actually is. After all, both Bernard Herrmann and Raymond Scott started out as house composers for New York stations at a time when the airwaves were crammed with soap operas, serials, thrillers and mysteries. Whatever vulgar, energising spark might once have animated such productions, however, it has sadly fizzled to nothing in this ponderous coupling of Zeena Parkins's music with Simo's overwrought text. That edgy sense of pace, together with an inventive economy of means designed to keep an audience listening, have been replaced here by dialogue so amorphously self-indulgent that it requires not only a full plot synopsis but also a detailed track listing of entrances and exits in each scene to convey any sense of what is going on. Somewhere in the background, guitarist Chris Cochrane sounds as if he's enjoying himself while Ikue Mori performs her usual miracles on electronic percussion, but the whole endeavour sinks under the blind fervour of actors desperate to make their lines seem far grander than they actually are. With too little soap on display and even less opera, *The Opium War* somehow manages to make even narcotics sound dull. Just say no.

KEN HOLLINGS

Roedelius

Global Trotters Project Volume 1

Drive

RHODISC RCD10480 CD

Drive initiates a projected series involving collaborations between Hans-Joachim Roedelius and diverse musicians and composers from all over the world. Guests here are Mexican singer Alquimia, British composer David Bickley, and Japanese musicians Susumu Hirasawa and Kenji Konishi.

As a member of Cluster and across more than 30 solo albums, Roedelius has played a pivotal role in steering Krautrock towards Ambient. When Michael Rother joined Cluster and brought Harmonia into existence, Roedelius joined the ranks of what Biba Kopf (in *The Wire* 184) identifies as German Dromomaniacs, addicted to the road. French dromologist Paul Virilio claims that speed and mobility resist the totalitarian stasis of the Reich. Perhaps Roedelius's nomadic trotting should be viewed in that light. Yet *Drive* is scarcely a radical act of deterritorialisation. It brings no real surprises, but rather confirms a category.

It will bring pleasure to listeners addicted to the hypnotic pulse of Roedelius's short, insistently repeated electronic keyboard phrases. On the title track, serene drift suddenly locks into propulsively percussive gear in a manner that harks back to Krautrock classics such as Michael Hoenig's *Departure From The Northern Wasteland*. "Tribal Engine" is adorned with sonorities that wander further afield, recalling Jon Hassell's Fourth World fusions. Most compelling of all is "Parallel Motives", an animated soundweb perceived unravelling through a hazy shimmer. The piece appears in two versions: the second a 25 minute remix by Alex Paterson of The Orb. The somewhat calmer and less stately original is infectiously sinuous.

JULIAN COWLEY

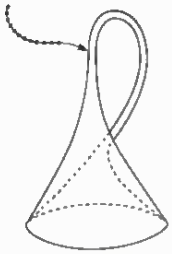
DJ Cheb i Sabbah

Shri Durga

SIX DEGREES NATION NRCD1[illegible] CD

In opening his disc with a blessing, *"May it be auspicious,"* Bay Area World/Trance DJ Cheb i Sabbah summons the faithful to *Shri Durga*, a scintillating admixture of turntable science and classic Hindustani ragas. Make no mistake: his labour of love is a remix record, with all that implies. Background noises and melodies are imported from cremation sites and temple courtyards (some recorded by film maker Ira Cohen, whose own reissued album *Jilala* is drenched in ambience). Beats appear from nowhere and stomp across the landscape. Much of the album, however, fits within the same mould as 70s minimalist Jon Gibson's *Visitations*, as it often resembles a dense fog of sound swirling between the speakers.

Having said that, the air of reverence and mystery hovering above *Shri Durga* is so thick it can be cut with a knife. Each track title has a footnote citing the raga from which it was derived. Beats figure in Sabbah's scheme with much subtlety. The free-metre passages that comprise an alap (the introductory portion of a raga) afford the remixer a broad canvas. The vocals of Salamat and Sharafat Ali Khan are treated with reverence, and when the beats enter, the piece begins to describe the



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Ituri Forest Pygmies: 'Can we play the drums?'

Various Artists
At The Court Of The Mwami, Rwanda, 1952
SHARP WOOD PRODUCTIONS/HUGH TRACEY SWP010/HT01 CD

Various Artists
Royal Court Music From Uganda, 1950 & 1952
SHARP WOOD PRODUCTIONS/HUGH TRACEY SWP010/HT02 CD

Various Artists
On The Edge Of The Ituri Forest, 1952
SHARP WOOD PRODUCTIONS/HUGH TRACEY SWP010/HT03 CD

Various Artists
Kalimba & Kalumbu Songs, Northern Rhodesia, 1952 & 1957
SHARP WOOD PRODUCTIONS/HUGH TRACEY SWP010/HT04 CD

What is the difference between a World Music CD and an ethnographic music recording? Is it simply a measure of the gap between academicism and commercialism, or does it mark the universal shift from socially integrated and participatory musics to passive entertainment and professionalism? The distinction has been blurred over the past 15 years, since World Music's rise coincided with the CD takeover. Ethnographic recordings seemed to be locked into the vinyl era, with many new recordings of ostensibly non-commercial, global music packaged to appeal to the Worldbeat neophyte and the majority of vinyl treasures vanishing into forgotten history.

Perhaps these four CDs are indications of a changing focus. They represent a fraction of the recording work undertaken by Hugh Tracey in Africa. Tracey, who died in 1977, founded the International Library of African Music in 1954 and his Sound Of Africa series had released 210 records by the time he died. Remarkably well recorded considering the technical limitations of portable tape recorders in the early 1950s and the difficult environmental conditions, they are documents from a lost world.

Most poignant of all, perhaps, is the collection of music from Rwanda. The sleevenotes make no mention of the unbearable atrocities that have devastated the region in recent years, though a brief history leading up to the immediate post-colonial period outlines the internal tensions and European interference that would lead to catastrophe. Tracey captured music from the last few years of the Tutsi Banyiginya dynasty, the court of Mwami Mutara III Rudahigwa, before Rwanda was proclaimed a republic in 1961.

Musically, the court was diverse: a 24 track selection features drum tattoos and orchestras, beautiful praise songs that sound more Scottish than African, and the strange intore dance played by drums and horns, the sort of ghostly ensemble that reeks with the atmosphere of a breakthrough from the spirit domain.

Uganda's courts also disappeared, and again Tracey captured their last moments. His recordings of Temusewo Mukasa, the last Ganda royal harpist, are spectacular examples of a tonally and rhythmically complex vocal and instrumental interplay. The torrent of buzzing notes from the harp, like the swarming of hornets under Mukasa's mirliton-like vocal humming and percussive wordstreams, are a salutory reminder of how much this music was simplified with the advent of the electric guitar. The song subjects are pretty good, too: "Gganga Escaped" is about a man who stole some meat and had his fingers chopped off, though this bland slice of gossip obscures the true meaning: Gganga seduced one of the royal daughters, in fact, and had his penis chopped off, which doesn't sound like much of an escape to me.

I'm speculating, but I suspect that Tracey really enjoyed recording instruments like the harp, the thumb piano and the xylophone. He did it so well, preserving their rich globular tones or malevolent buzzing without sacrificing the clarity of the cyclical patterns they weave. Drums must have been fiendishly difficult for him to record accurately, but the tracks featuring the Royal Entenga Drummers make the noise of giant rubber balls cascading through the traps of a pachinko game. The first of these drum pieces is a composition inspired by an Englishman who visited Kampala in 1903 with the eccentric idea of building a roundabout — a rare and fortuitous case of cross-cultural circularity.

Over the years, I have listened to a number of contemporary African musicians pontificating, guru-style, about Africa being the root and all other musics being the branches. Is African music reducible to the image of a single tree? Is it always the source? As Temusewo Musakak's harp playing and singing illustrate, East African music has been influenced by 1000 years of Arab settlement. Whose African music anyway? *On The Edge Of The Itun Forest*, recorded in northeast Belgian Congo, as it then was, documents the musical consequences of an often fraught master/wayward servant relationship between the rainforest dwelling Mbuti Pygmies and the Bantu peoples living on the edge of the forest.

Influences flew backwards and forwards in all directions. Some of the most fantastic music on this disc is the shimmering, aetherial Luma end-blown bamboo pipe ensemble played by Pygmies in a Bantu Nande village. Dangerously, it evokes the elusive, nomadic, 'close to nature' image of the Pygmies, yet the pipes were made by the Nande, who ordered the Pygmies about, and kept the tubes in the village for their use when they came out of the forest.

Perhaps the most immediately attractive of these four discs is *Kalimba & Kalumbu Songs, Northern Rhodesia*. The kalimba is a thumb piano; the kalumbu is a musical bow. Instruments that are dying out except as items for sale at WOMAD festivals, they are revealed through Hugh Tracey's recordings to be frozen drops of glass, three legged metal machines hopping asymetrically through dried leaves. "I can die now, it does not matter," a thumb piano player told Hugh Tracey, "because I am inside that [record] now." A statement that hangs in the air and asks many questions.

DAVID TOOP

trajectory of a missile [illegible] and then with ever-increasing velocity towards the sun. Also, in the places where drumloops are most successfully added, the magnetic pull of qawwali, from neighbouring Pakistan, is invoked. This project, like North Indian classical music itself, spirals outward from the firmament of the human voice. One of this century's greatest khyal singers, Ustad Salamat Ali Khan, is prominent in *Shri Durga*'s mix, as are his sons Sharafat and Shafqat Ali Khan. The sarangi, a viola-like instrument whose oily timbre traditionally accompanies vocalists, is also featured heavily. Ustad Sultan Khan has a tendency to repeat passages almost with Philip Glass-like precision. His style of bowing is perfect for the chop-'em-up remix aesthetic, and even in the ProTooled take on classical performance found here, it is easy enough to detect that Sultan Khan plays entirely in the service of his singers.

Occasionally, the laminate of virtuosity and ingenuity comes unstuck. On 'Mere Kabu', based on *Raag Mishra Vardhini*, Sukhawat Ali Khan's vocal is the sound of heartbreak itself. Then the sloshing TripHop beats roll in, as an American voice intones, *"Hallucinations... and sounds... of your voice... are haunting me"*. The kind of flair for the obvious evidenced by such juxtapositions may be exactly the flair which Indian music has never felt the need to cultivate. This may be why the deities — possibly Gandharva, the one looking after music, invented the fade button on your CD player's remote control, for most of the track is stunning.

RICHARD HENDERSON

Scanner
Lauwarm Instrumentals
SULPHUR SU100 [illegible]

Robin Scanner, Rimbaud's first release on his own label, offers six instrumental pieces that might best be seen as exercises in spatial relationships. Cool, unhurried and clever, they set about placing rhythm tracks (clattering stadium rock-like drums on 'Immemory', chattering breakbeats on 'Lithia Water') against scraps of melody, bubbles of noise and occasional vocal samples. It's an album made up of interplay, repetitions, textural contrasts and minimalist landscapes.

It's all highly intelligent, absorbing in a jigsaw puzzle kind of way, but scrupulously purged of emotion. This is a music to admire but never to love, prompting a knowing smile or an acknowledging nod, never a swoon or a grin. A cynic might also point to the pretensions of giving tracks French or German names for no detectable reason other than a gestural cosmopolitanism. But then it would be foolish to brand such music with the label of pretentiousness, as foolish as accusing an elephant of being big. The yearning aspiration towards musical seriousness is the lifeblood of this branch of electronica. It forms its chief function, reassures its coterie of devotees that they're not wasting their time on anything as trivial as mere entertainment. Artists... and boy do they want that designation... like Scanner are wholly uninterested in outreach; theirs is a closed, monastic aesthetic.

Within that framework, *Lauwarm Instrumentals* has moments of genuine, if austere beauty. 'Lithia Water' could almost be Moby's 'Go' with a degree in computer graphics. But there I go again, soiling the purity of the record by comparisons to a chart hit when I ought to be respecting its wish to stay cloistered in its own love affair with inwardness.

ANDY MEDHURST

Sensational
Corner The Market
[illegible] ND WSCD032 CD

Three Sensational: 'My organisation's Chunk Of Blitz', 'Ciao', 'Yeah, I'm an addict, I'm a money addict, freak addict, weed addict, musical addict... and I like to inflict the addiction', threatens Sensational on 'Identification'. Inflict is the right word. As Torture, Sensational was the impetus behind The Jungle Brothers' 1993 detour into leftfield... his noise-drenched style was the driving force of their semi-mythical *Crazy Wisdom Masters* album, which a nervous Warner Brothers deemed unfit for release, at least until it was bowdlerised and repackaged as the patchy *J Beez Wit Da Remedy*. In the aftermath of that debacle, Sensational retreated to the underground, picked up a new name, and recorded the most bizarre and uncompromising HipHop record I've ever heard in last year's *Looded With Power*. That album, centred on strangulated, rasping vocals and crippled rhythms, took incoherence to the brink of psychosis; the follow up, as its slyly ironic title might indicate, is less deranged. Slightly.

Deprived of a microphone, Sensational recorded most of the vocals on *Loaded With Power* through his headphones. Now properly equipped, his rapping is revealed as coming in somewhere between Ol' Dirty Bastard's blundering lunacy and Tricky's icy focus. He picks up on and repeats nursery rhyme phrases and lewd cliches with autistic insistence, in the process anaesthetising their meaning. Tracks like 'Disco Lights' and 'Private Party' promise conventional hedonism, but filtered though Sensational's consciousness, they deliver the cold arithmetic of the meat market. Similarly, the rhythm tracks make heavy use of ageing 80s drum machine sounds, but avoid any kind of kitsch referentiality (cf Les Rhythmes Digitales), setting up instead a kind of ghostly revelry for abandoned circuitry.

Recording in his own Bomb Shelter studio in Brooklyn, Sensational doesn't use a sampler. Somewhat quixotically, the offkilter noises, wayward drones, wheezing synths and queasy smears that orbit uneasily around the sparse beats are all dubbed in manually... the resulting sense of ramshackle freedom connects the music to the likes of Suicide and Cabaret Voltaire as much as The Wu Tang Clan. Sensational's breathtakingly daring blend of insouciance and monomania could only have developed in proud and profound isolation... and for those hidebound by convention, the product will be painful evidence of the deleterious effects of weed abuse. For everyone else, however, the 21 spooked and spectral tracks of *Corner The Market* will represent the HipHop breakthrough of the year.

CHRIS SHARP

snd
Makesnd Cassette
MILE PLATE[illegible] • MP69 CD

Snd are masters of micromanagement. Pitched somewhere between the obsessional panhandling of time that characterises their Sheffield compatriots Autechre, and the undulating, tonal films of sound that swim underneath Basic Channel's beats, theirs is a cool, subliminal music that has the opposite effect of a night drive through Babylon: it seems to slow its environment down. It is more restrained than the threshing, incessant clacking of Autechre's recent work, where no sound is left unturned for more than about 15 seconds. For the most part, snd have already worked on the idea before they begin recording, and once it's in place, they leave it to run with minimal adjustment.

Patched together with a similar grab bag of machinic clicks and spreading invertebrate blobtones as Pole's dub eddies, snd's electronica evokes small events that often go unnoticed: think of rain spotting the outside of a tent, plastic suckers on tiling, popping bubblewrap (perhaps the title's cassette should be read as a French form of 'little break', rather than an outmoded and impractical tape medium). The flipside of Speed Garage's urbane bounce, this music shares some of its clipped urgency while draining itself of context. If Garage is, as Simon Reynolds points out, a form of aspirational comfort listening, coke 'n' cookies luxury, the kind of music snd represent is of unfurnished withdrawal: an outsider operation in which the hermit's retreat into a technological Aladdin's cave is used to reach an accommodation with the machines that surround us. It can feel extremely spartan at times: this record... a concrete loft furnished according to the diktat of *Wallpaper*' magazine with Muji trimmings. But I'm glad this cooling space exists.

ROB YOUNG

Suicide
The Second Album
BLAST FIRST BFFP162 2XCD 2XLP

With their second album, New York's guttersnipe electronics duo moved from the dark, downtown claustrophobia of their first LP to the bright lights of an uptown studio. The music correspondingly opened up to allow a

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the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

The bottom of the **Lee Perry** barrel is still years away on the evidence of the terrific *Black Arkives* (Justice League JLCD5005 CD) Spanning the years 1973–75, this material is rougher and sometimes quirkier than his more streamlined Island-era work. Highlights include a mighty horns version of "Vampire" the weird vocals of the obscure Sam Carty and the motorbikin' effects on "Cane River Rock" There's one late Black Ark cut Eric Donaldon's Stand Up' with a sublime dub From the same source *The Upsetter Shop Vol 2* (Heartbeat 7601 CD) is a storming collection of the cranky, surreal dance music Perry was pumping out in the late 60s and early 70s Give or take the occasional unnecessary alternate mix this is great Jamaican pop A 90 second snatch of JBC's Upsetter Radio Show captures the intoxicating flavour Some of the material here is available elsewhere, but taken from the original masters, this is a clean-sounding set. US soul and funk spill into the music everywhere, as on the treatment of "Cloud 9"

Kip Hanrahan has built a solid reputation as composer, producer and musical facilitator across a series of ambitious projects for instance, David Murray Lester Bowie Taj Mahal Carla Bley and Jamaaladeen Tacuma contributed to 19B3's *Conjure* his collaboration with novelist Ishmael Reed The 19B6 EP *A Few Short Notes From The End Run* (American Clave AMCL1D11 CD) is a more closely circumscribed undertaking a set of singles, four songs, one of them done twice His pared down ensemble still boasts Jack Bruce Allen Toussaint, Anton Fier and Steve Swallow This is how drum and bass used to sound, with an array of percussionists, including Milton Cardona and Daniel Ponce and when Andy Gonzalez joins Bruce and Swallow three bassists in unison Corporeal music was clearly the aim as they constructed the rhythmic underpinning for Hanrahan's songs which are invariably heavy on erotic content A minor release maybe, but an incentive to revisit Hanrahan's full length albums

Produced in 1974 at the height of Prog rock, the second **Henry Cow** album *Unrest* (ReR ReRHC2 CD) might not mean much to your average Barclay James Harvest fan, but it totally revalidates the notion of progressive music Crucially they went into the studio short of material and came up with a set of improvisations that veered from austere calm to volcanic intensity Yet even their most complex and challenging sections are balanced with lyrical passages The lengthy episodic 'Ruins contrasts tuned percussion passages with thickets of wind chords from Stravinsky's *Symphonies Of Wind Instruments* The remastering is superb

60s jazz pianist **Marc Moulin** is an unsung pioneer of today's dance scene Joe Zawinul and Herbie Hancock's work for Miles Davis turned him on to new electronic keyboard sounds, and under the influence of James Brown and Sly Stone he formed Placebo as an outlet for his take on new fusion Gathering the highlights from three albums, *The Placebo sessions 1971–1974* (Counterpoint CRD05 CD/LP) demonstrates Moulin's prescience Built around powerful horn arrangements tight-knit funk and Moulin's excursions on Minimoog and Fender Rhodes it still sounds crushingly contemporary, particularly the proto-HipHop programming of Humpty Dumpty" and the synthesized basslines of "Stomp" Moulin went on to form Sam Suffy a trio whose rhythm-based musique concrete influenced such beat collagists as DJ Shadow His next project tragically was Telex

Jack Kerouac's *Legends Of The 20th Century* (EMI 72435201BB26 CD) compiles the *Poetry For The Beat Generation* LP which he recorded with Steve Allen on piano and *Blues And Haikus* with saxophonists Zoot Simms and Al Cohn both previously only available in a Kerouac box set Highlights include his most perfectly formed prose poem "October In The Railroad Earth' and a rare chance to catch his affectionate, if bizarre singing style on Hard-Hearted Farmer" Listening to Jack at the piano, laughing to hear the crazy music is a timely rejoinder to the heavily reductive revisionist view, currently in vogue, of the latter-day Kerouac as a drunken slobbering bigot

Irascible maverick and one-time Scratch Orchestra member **David Jackman** is best known for Organum which specialises in grating noise blizzards ambient environmental sound and metallic screeching, all with a striking ritualistic quality But the solo album *Sol Mara* (Die Stadt DS19/Robot RR21 CD), takes a very different tack First released as a one sided record included with Organum's *Ikon* its CD version accompanies the original with three variations all built entirely from looped samples of bamboo flute It lies somewhere between the Fourth World music of Jon Hassell, a limpid reverie set in a World Music netherzone and ponderous, hypnotic minimalism *Reviewed by Mike Barnes, Julian Cowley Brian Duguid David Keenan Peter McIntyre and Will Montgomery*

few blurs of technicolour melody into the intense monochrome of their earlier sound The opening track, "Diamonds, Fur Coat Champagne" indicates that they were at least glimpsing the life of the beautiful people, although its counter-refrain, *"a soul for disguise"*, suggests they were just annotating desperation on a different plane There is nothing here to match the boxed-in violence of the debut, although there are moments The hedonism the album espouses has the desperate ring that categorised the early 80s "Fast Money Music" has the sound of a tooth and nail clattering in a gutter "Mr Ray" is a driven streetscene drama rooted in The Velvet Underground paced by the beat of flesh on flesh where the handclaps sound like a slaparound in a precinct interrogation room And in the nervous taxi drive through a devastated city that is the song "Harlem" you get glimpses of the deprivation out of which the duo came

The second album might not have anything to match the sheer symphonic grandeur of the first's "Che", but Martin Rev's arrangements are never less than compelling On a simplistic electro doo-wop tune like 'Sweetheart", for instance, he supplements its basic melody with a multitude of echoes that give depth to a rather two dimensional lyric

The significant addition to this reissue is the full 12" version of "Dream Baby Dream" On Suicide's finest pure pop moment, Rev's rolling and grinding melody combines with Vega's wild-eyed optimism to create an alchemical glow The Augustus Pablo-like flipside of the original single "Radiation" is also included

The bonus CD of early demos is more of a historical curiosity than a genuine addition to the Suicide oeuvre The one revelation of these sketch-like fragments is Alan Vega's voice, which, unbelievably, sounds even more deranged and psychotic than it did on the first Suicide album

DON WATSON

Various Artists
The Bali Sessions
RYKODISC RCD10449 3XCD

That elusive genre, a genuinely popular 20th century classical music firmly rooted in mainstream society, is pretty much the norm in Bali This is just one of the many things that make the island such a mind-stretching experience for anyone with an interest in music In contrast to all Western urban models, here is a rural orchestral tradition played by amateur musicians — farmers and office workers during everyday life Wearing an expression of supreme nonchalance and puffing on a clove-scented cigarette, your Balinese gamelan player hammers out complex rhythmic figures interlocking tightly enough to recall ensembles like The Duke Ellington Orchestra

Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart has curated the extensive World Series of recordings which includes *Voices Of The Rainforest (Papua New Guinea)* and *Music For The Gods*, gamelan recordings from 1941 Now he presents a triple CD set of recordings, which he supervised in person, of Balinese gamelans Given that plenty of recordings from Bali are available, how does Hart make his batch stand out from the crowd? The answer has to be the sheer quality of the sound Unlike many flattish field recordings, these discs have a 3D quality attained through Hart's state of the art production Hart went to extraordinary lengths to get this sound Instead of wandering around temples with a mic, he brought all the outstanding groups to a particular hall with good acoustics After dark, he cordoned off the hall and hired six men "to patrol the streets, quieting roaming dogs, motorcycles and cars" Having been pursued myself by a pack of Balinese dogs I would like to know the methods he favoured for quieting them

Inside the hall, Hart even had to turn off the fans to obtain absolute quiet, so that soon each performer was sitting in a puddle of sweat. I'm not averse to gamelan albums containing the odd blast of birdsong or wailing baby, but I have to admit that musically Hart's struggles have paid off and these are stunningly vivid recordings There is air and space around the music, and the separation of the instruments is excellent Every jangling rattle is crisp, every deep throated gong shakes the room, and the bristling excitement of the Balinese gamelan in full flight is well captured

Carefully selecting rarer ensembles and new compositions, the album avoids the popular Kebyar style found on many other records Instead we get the Gamelan Selonding, the oldest in Bali and the only one made from iron The Gong Suling is a 19 strong group, of whom 13 play flutes of all sizes Strangest is the Gamelan Genggong, in which the melodies are twanged by five jaw's harp players Gamelan Jegog consists of large bamboo instruments, and the sound is noticably more exciting than on another CD I have of the same ensemble

The second disc is dominated by almost an hour of Kecak, the jabbering 'voice orchestra' that accompanies dance dramas telling stories from the Ramayana epic And the third disc features new pieces by three prominent Balinese composers, including the beautiful "Wibluti' which occasionally takes off in the heightened rhythmic style of Kebyar, and compensates for the lack of any Kebyar elsewhere It's hard to see any evidence here of decline either in performance standards or in the continuing development of the tradition by a new generation of composers

We may shudder slightly at the thought of the American rock star arriving in Bali with his entourage, hi-tech equipment in the one hand and persuasive dollars in the other But Mickey Hart is clearly motivated by immense respect for the local music He believes it deserves to be recorded exactly as if it was The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the results can be played at the same volume you favour for your Stravinsky or Messaien

CLIVE BELL

the boomerang extra

Ben Watson unearths some lost documents of British free jazz

Sony Music Entertainment (UK) Ltd have decided to remind us of the state of British music between 1969 and 1970 as defined by a brace of releases each from **Howard Riley Ray Russell** and **Tony Oxley** The original LPs became fabulously rare, sought after tokens from an era when major labels (in this case Columbia) had been sent into a headspin by the commercial success of psychedelia and were signing up all manner of weirdness free jazz avant garde rock, austere modernist free improvisation hippy-dippy freeform noodling — just in case it turned out to be gold plated

Today as he occasionally pops up from academia to contribute resourceful piano to improvised gigs by the likes of Eddie Prevost and George Haslam Howard Riley seems an unlikely case for corporate sponsorship However in 1968 he recorded duets with John McLaughlin in a pre-Miles pre-Mahavishnu incarnation In his 1969 trio recording, *Angle* (Sony Columbia 494433 CD) Riley plays modern jazz after Monk and Bill Evans infused with an English pastoral sensibility over a somewhat incompatible rhythm section of bassist Barry Guy and drummer Alan Jackson Guy wreaks some astonishing skronk effects, rattling his bow on close-miked strings linking Siegfried Palm s performances of Xenakis to Scott La Faro s work with Ornette Coleman On 'Angle' Guy's solo is a delirium-inducing window on freedom However it s a window Riley s pretty tune shuts down rather than resolves

Two years later Riley and Guy encountered Tony Oxley's drums on *Synopsis* (Incus) Oxley had the rhythmic nous and audacity to shatter Riley s pastoralism into glittering shards, making for a great record on *Angle* Riley s Debussy-like nostalgia and sonorous harmonies feel like a straitjacket "Three Fragments" is a short, through-composed piece with Barbara Thompson on flute This brief flash of modernist clarity full of Webern-like pointillism, is quickly dampened by "Gill", which is characterised by an Ealing Studios/Richard Rodney Bennett folksiness

The cover of Riley's *The Day Will Come* (Columbia 494434 CD) shows ivory chess warriors towered over by a matriarchal fertility sculpture "Sphere" (Thelonious Monk's middle name) hints at Cecil Taylorism but 'Winter" leads back to the restful minimalism of folk modes the kind of slow, meditative, chordal langour familiar from the ECM back catalogue Guy s excitable skills sound in need of braver company as he punches out anti-linear heresies beneath the blanket of Riley's limited range of chordal resolutions

Current interest in guitarist Ray Russell was piqued by the inclusion of his "Stained Angel Morning' on David Toop's *Guitars On Mars* collection where Russell came across as a premonition of the Death Metal Improv of Ascension s Stefan Jaworzyn His quartet album, *Dragon Hill* (Columbia 494435 CD) opens with eerie harmonics from Ron Mathewson s bowed bass, an ensemble flourish then a statement of the kind of nagging flattened interval that began *Kind Of Blue* Pianist Roy Fry goes off on a Tyneresque vamp Alan Rushton beating out a nervously irregular metre Russell's electric guitar is the wild card as he scribbles energetically over what is basically a hard bop arrangement His stinging, urgent tone is derived from Eric Clapton and BB King — an unusual sonority for jazz At one point, he pushes against Fry's harmonic direction, achieving the sensation of hearing two musics at once However Russell cannot manage a sustained harmonic argument, and it's more a jam than an improvisation, as Russell essays various rock riffs On the tracks that feature horns, Harry Beckett's lithe trumpet is notable, but Russell's guitar sounds somewhat thin and hysterical in a big band context.

"Can I Have My Paper-Back Back" uses a Mingus-like riff and electric piano, making Russell sound like Robben Ford with Joni Mitchell's LA Express Though he's refreshingly off-the-leash, you start to recognise his licks there's not much of the dissatisfaction with the familiar that drives creative improvisors, which possibly explains why Russell's future lay in session work.

The Russell Quartet's *Rites And Rituals* (Columbia 494436 CD) shows the influence of Coltrane s *Africa/Brass*, though the resultant over-excited jazz rock more closely resembles 70s groups like Nucleus and Centipede Six minutes into the title track, the improvisation takes off and sounds good, but the return to the arrangement is stilted, recalling the crude conjuncture of ill-digested musical effects encountered in early Pink Floyd Russell sounds winningly demented over a sub-Soft Machine riff on "Abyss" but bass and drums aren't equipped to respond to what he is doing Like their contemporaries The Amazing Band, The Ray Russell Quartet certainly aspire to states of exaltation, but they haven't examined the musical materials with enough detail to shake off cliche If form isn't grasped and reshaped, ordinary consciousness remains in charge

With the two Tony Oxley Sextet albums, the listener is tumbled into an entirely new universe Working in the early 60s in Sheffield with Derek Bailey and Gavin Bryars, Oxley had devised a way of combining the out jazz of John Coltrane and Bill Evans with senalist alienation and Cageian chance music. His group (Bailey on guitar, Evan Parker on sax, Kenny Wheeler on trumpet, Jeff Clyne on bass, with Oxley on drums) create a writhing, living monster of a sound where the 'soloist' is merely the crest of a wave of iridescent chaos There is no beat, but the whole thing has an organic groove, an inexorable surge

1969's *Baptised Traveller* (Columbia 494438 CD) is the less radical of the two discs Oxley recorded for Columbia, the music sounds as if the drummer is still settling his accounts with jazz. Evan Parker unleashes a powerful post-Archie Shepp tenor solo The zigzag theme of "Crossing" fits the rhythm perfectly, suggesting a waterfall cascading between massive rocks Cymbal spray hangs over the tenebrous gloom Charlie Manano's "Stone Garden" lives up to its Zen title, Derek Bailey's guitar providing alien lights — almost the sound of electric current rather than official notes — to its haunting theme

4 Compositions For Sextet (Columbia 494437 CD) is by the same group, plus the hair-raising 'reinvented trombone' of Paul Rutherford It is a stone cold, drop dead, icepick-in-the-forehead masterpiece The fact that it has been unavailable for 30 years has distorted every account of British music Sounds stain the musical surface and then run off into gullies and hairline cracks like slip glaze on a Japanese pot an astonishing fusion of chance and design. The music raises the blood, as if the musicians are tracking processes within the listener's body, massaging the pancreas, fingering the kidneys Bailey's 'experimental guitar' voicings — choked licks, stunted chords, shrill screams — always seem to lie alongside the other musicians' contributions rather than overlay them

Oxley's 'drum solo' on "Amass" is a Varese-like montage of determinate timbre punishing power and glancing metallica suggest an art factory industrial symphony of molten steel and mighty hammers The music starts to sound Beethovenian, like a natural force

It was all too much for Columbia, and Oxley was dropped He went to RCA, then independence — he helped found Bailey's Incus label — and finally obscurity and exile in East Berlin But *4 Compositions For Sextet* is out again now an artistic manifesto no one can ignore □

A bashful Tony Oxley (below); a speed-blurred Howard Riley (above)

PHOTOS JAK KILBY

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in brief avant rock

Reviewed by **Biba Kopf**

Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso UFO
Pataphisical Freak Out Mul!
PSF PSFD106 CD
Since their first album, Acid Mothers have transformed themselves from gurning Gongsters into a full-blown acid phreaker sect based on models like Father Yod, Amon Duul and Japanese hippie communes holed up in the mountains with Musica Transonic guitarist Makoto Kawabata as high priest. The project's high parodic contents protect them from becoming just another silly cult, even as they threaten to overwhelm their core identity. But at their frequent best, Acid Mothers transcend the silliness and mimicry to produce a set of heady, enthralling variations on a psychedelic theme, topped by Kawabata's skull-scraping reverb fantasia, "Blue Velvet Blues"

The Azusa Plane Result Dies With The Worker COLORFUL CLOUDS FOR ACOUSTICS CLOUD018/LA007 CD
Normally, Azuza Plane is a studio-bound project for Philadelphia guitarist Jason DiEmilio's solipsistic musings. For these 1997-98 live recordings, the addition of second guitarist Jason Knight and percussionist Quentin Stoltzfus raises the volume if not the musical vocabulary while *Halana* magazine's Chris Rice and Ian Nagoski add the occasional, very welcome instrumental variation. How much variation can a monotone yield? That depends to a large extent on the deep listening capabilities of the audience. But with these low sconing minor league minimalists, you have to wonder whether they're worth the effort. At their most dynamic, The Azusa Plane tag and tail the jet trails left behind by Sonic Youth: at their dullest, they're as leaden as a Glenn Branca drum part.

The Black Heart Procession
2 TOUCH AND GO TG194 CD
From San Diego, The Black Heart Procession consist of Tobias Nathaniel and Pall A Jenkins. True to Pall's sophomoric spelling and the duo's moniker, their game's as glum as their name. *"If you are the light house in the storm/I'll be the ship with a thousand dead souls,"* they groan over a barely seaworthy backing on "A Light So Dim". Yet within the funereal confines of their mordant, cranky gloom, they ring some inventive tones out of their idiosyncratic instrumentation: musical saw, pump organ, guitars, waterphone, Moog, sheet metal, etc. Most significantly, their use of Wurlitzer piano recalls the desolate uses Neil Young made of the instrument on *On The Beach*, though there's little here that cuts as deep as Young's "Walk On"

Kan Mikami Nanbushiki
PSF PSFD8002 CD
Once the enfant terrible of the late 60s/early 70s Japanese folk boom, Kan Mikami's annual solo albums (this is his ninth) can still howl with the frustrated rage of the early days, but nowadays are more likely to be suffused with the glow of mature reflection. Though ever the master of an obliquely personal and poetic frame of reference, most of the songs here would seem to deal with post-war Japan's spiritual malaise. Whatever the theme, Mikami's unique, fractured guitar accompaniment and deeply cracked vocals communicate a passion and easy authority that speaks clearly across any language barrier. The title refers to the model of handgun carried by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War Two. *(Alan Cummings)*

La! Neu? Live In Tokyo 1996 Vol 2 CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD176/177 2xCD
La! Neu? Blue (La Dusseldorf 5)
CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD178 CD
True to contrary form, Klaus Dinger's barrel-scraping excavations of his archives have turned up an erratic gem in *Blue*, alongside a hopelessly scrappy live double set, culled from the same Tokyo dates that produced the already horribly over-stretched two-disc *Cha-Cha 2000* release. Dispatching the worst first, scattered amid the throwaway tracks of Dinger chitchatting with tour personnel and exhausting fans are two aberrant, extended romps on familiar Neu! and La Dusseldorf themes ("Viva" and "Hero 96") while the thumpingly hypnotic monotony of "America" is a splendid Dinger adaptation of his motorik groove for a hijacked Panzer tank. As his usual, crazed sleevenotes tell it, *Blue* would have been *Düsseldorf V*, had it not been turned down by a world conspiracy of cloth-eared record company moguls. Recorded between 1984-86 in Zeeland, it has its share of wonderful moments: the frontroom Hawaiian blues of the title track, the daft rant of "Arms Control Blues", and best of all, the original "America", where Dinger's motorik is bolstered by the Belfegore rhythm section of Charly T on drums and Raoul Walton on bass.

Man Or Astro-man? Eeviac
TOUCH AND GO/EPITAPH EUROPE 65642 CD
Man Or Astro-man? originally rode in on the same wave of instrumental groups that produced Bruce Licher's post-Savage Republic unit Scenic. Today they occasionally punctuate their Dick Dale/Silver Surfer cosmic fusions with irritating Kraftwerk-like robot voices or unnecessary punk vocals. But you can forgive them plenty for the closing two tracks, which fire on a particularly volatile rocket fuel of shrill surfboard guitars and space echo.

The MC5 Thunder Express
JUNGLE FREUD71 CD
This first-time official release of a 1972 French concert TV broadcast showcases The MC5 at the peak of their hardrock power. "Kick Out The Jams" and "Motor City Is Burning" might be nostalgic nods towards their 'power to the people' phase, but most of the rest attests that they were really at their hardrocking best once they'd musically jettisoned the revolutionary White Panther schtick their mentor John Sinclair burdened them with. The package is completed by two Sinclair-produced singles sessions from 1966 and 68.

Rachel's Selenography
QUARTERSTICK QS55 CD/2xLP
What does a chamber group have to do to win plaudits from the rock press? Formed in Baltimore and now based in Louisville Kentucky, Rachel's charm offensive elicited rhapsodic responses from some of the most doggedly monosyllabic bastions of rock journalism. They incline to wistfulness, which makes them heirs to both the melodic charm of American rock sensitives Hugo Largo, and to the smooth textures and expansive structures of British composer Gavin Bryars. Here, chief Rachel's multi-instrumentalists Jason Noble and Christian Fredenckson, and keyboards player Rachel Grimes, are augmented by additional viola and cello, plus percussion, trumpet and occasional vocals. Though superficially pretty, a substantial musicality underpins its tranquil surface. *(Julian Cowley)*

Sackville The Principles Of Science CONSTELLATION CST007 CD
Sackville are not only from the same Montreal label that brought the world Godspeed You Black Emperor!, they also pop out of the same mould. Having said that, Sackville produce more of an old world take on pastoral themes out of their combination of guitars, violin, keyboards, male and female vocals. Whether they like it or not, the new world they were born into is a harsh place, with little patience for the gentility of such tracks as "If His Shadow Moves On The Water". That they dare persist with a pretty plainchant music bordering tweeness suggests they have the right kind of attitude to tough it out in this tough world ☐

in brief classical

Reviewed by **Andy Hamilton**

Kevin Bowyer Mandelion Contemporary Music For Organ NIMBUS NI5580/1 2XCD

The organ — and I don't mean the Hammond B3 — hasn't been conspicuous in these pages. Its time comes at last with this intriguing if variable survey of mostly British composers by Kevin Bowyer. As with contemporary church music in general, writing for the 'iron voice' is something of a haven for the second-rate, and the good material here could have been fitted on one disc. But there are outstanding pieces by New Complexity necromancer Brian Ferneyhough, and Diana Burrell, whose spectral *Arched Forms* concludes with eerie bell-like effects. It's hard to believe they come from an organ.

Violeta Dinescu Reversing Fields SARGASSO S28027 CD

Maybe it's down to the particular grimness of communism under Ceausescu, but the sound textures of contemporary Romanian composers tend to be violent, abrasive and harrowing. That's certainly true of Dinescu, born in 1953, who escaped to Germany in 1982. Mostly for clarinet and viola, solo or duo, these pieces exploit multiphonics as grating as anything in free improv. The viola playing on "Rand", in particular, is some of the most violent you'll encounter. But there are folk reminiscences too — skirling pipes in "Reversing Fields" for clarinet.

FourPlay String Quartet Catgut Ya Tongue? SMART PUSSY NO NUMBER CD

"Australia's premier independent rock 'n' roll string quartet", boasts the publicity — you mean there's more than one? Their version of "Theme From *Dr Who*" is superbly transformed into something baroque sounding. The traditional string quartet idea of conversation between four equal partners was thrown out by Kronos in their crossover creations, but they're a genteel bunch compared to these Heavy Metal aficionados. Intonation and ensemble precision aren't priorities either, and the solitary vocal — by violinist Lara Goodridge on Nina Simone's "My Baby Just Cares For Me" — is a mistake but what the hell. Metallica's "Enter Sandman" and The Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" never sounded like this before, and FourPlay have a knack of bringing out the melody in the most unlikely music.

Philip Gelb between/waves SPARKLING BEATNIK RECORDS SBR0006 CD

The Sparkling Beatnik label is based in Columbia, Montana, but the two tracks making up this release were recorded on the West Coast, at Berkeley and Mills College. On Chris Brown's 'waves', Philip Gelb is partnered by the composer on electronics while 'the space between' features a quartet of improvisors — Gelb on shakuhachi, Pauline Oliveros on accordion, Jon Raskin from The ROVA Quartet on saxes and Dana Reason on piano. This is an intriguing mix of players, instruments and styles — Gelb's fluttering Japanese flute matches Oliveros's goblinesque accordion, and from the midpoint Raskin becomes more assertive on saxes. Floating, mostly low key but quietly compelling.

Chris Jarrett Scenes & Preludes LEVEL GREEN 22005 CD

Not that he makes a big deal of it, but Chris (born 1956) is Keith Jarrett's younger brother. Chris has made his home in Germany, and this is his debut CD in the US. It's odd that he's chosen the same career as his more talented and egomaniac older brother, in the same stylistic area of solo improvised piano with classical aspirations. A lot of this eclectic music, rather tragically, sounds like Keith on an off day — but that still means it's well worth a listen.

Arsenije Jovanovic Arsenije Jovanovic LEGENDE DES VOIX LV008 CD

Three of Jovanovic's four soundscapes were commissioned by RTB Yugoslavia in the 70s and 80s. The fourth, "Ma Maison", from 1993, evidently follows a move to Paris, and consists of 'sound souvenirs' of the composer's house. Industrial sounds on "Invasions" are muted, while "Resava Cave" is filled with ghostly echoing voices. 'The Island Of The Dying Donkeys' was inspired by a holiday on a small island where worn-out donkeys used to be sent to die of starvation. In a haunting sonic meditation, he imagines the seagulls echoing like the voices of the dying animals. Hearing these gentle pieces by an animal-loving pacifist from former Yugoslavia carries a particular sense of poignancy.

Eduardo Polonio Uno Es El Cubo NO REKORDS NO22 CD

This opera, whose title translates as *One Is The Cube*, is "a Keplerian fantasy in five perfect solids" by Spanish electroacoustic specialist Polonio. According to 17th century astronomer Johannes Kepler, the perfect solids are the cube, pyramid, dodecahedron, icosahedron and the octahedron, though how Polonio's very strange 65 minute opera reflects this selection is hard to say. The libretto is — to put it charitably — rather philosophical. Kepler was intrigued by seeing the 1577 comet as a child, which the libretto translates into a scene featuring the child Kepler giving the comet to the adult Kepler, who returns it to the sky where it came from, presumably. An exotic, spacy synthesizer backdrop enhances the weirdness of the result.

Rod Poole Trio Iasis TRANSPARENCY 0010 CD

An 18 minute CD single featuring Poole on acoustic guitar, backed by Douglas Williford and Joseph Hammer on bowed guitars — all playing in Just Intonation. Comparisons have rightly been made with John Fahey and post-La Monte Young dronemeisters Arnold Dreyblatt and Phill Niblock. That's royal company for this particular corner of the New Music empire, but the novel sonorities of Poole and his companions have a very pleasing effect.

Ákos Rózmann Impulsioni/De Två, Med Tre Instrument FYLKINGEN FY1013 CD

Akos Rozmann believes that electroacoustic music is the greatest expressive device of our time. Born in Budapest in 1939, he moved to Sweden in 1974. *Impulsion I–III* from 1973–74 was realised in various electronic music studios in Stockholm using exclusively synthetic resources. The hour long *De Tva* (*Two For Three Instruments*) from 20 years later reflects his turn to concrete samples — built from organ, piano and zither sounds and the composer's own voice. This is eerie, unsettling music — alienating, dissonant, predominantly mournful. In the later stages bad manners take over with a prolonged attack of flatulence, expectorating and gargling.

Steffen Schleiermacher Music At The Bauhaus MDG 61308782 CD

Steffen Schleiermacher Enfants Terribles HAT[NOW]ART 121 CD

Schleiermacher is a leading advocate of contemporary piano music. *Enfants Terribles* flags itself as a "celebration of the Outsider" with pieces from such delinquent iconoclasts as John Zorn, Tom Johnson, Nicolaus Richter De Vroe, Sven Åke Johansson and Schleiermacher himself. Johnson's *Tango* is a strangely minimal affair. De Vroe's *Gabbro* has the rhythmic complexities of Ligeti's pattern-illusion pieces. Johansson's *Vom Gleichwertigen* is Feldmanesque, while Zorn's *Carny* features cod boogie woogie and quotes from the classics.

Music At The Bauhaus surveys music associated with the great school of architecture and design closed by the Nazis in 1933. Most intriguing are pieces by the unsung other pioneer of serialism, Josef Hauer (1883–1959). Hauer was so pleased with his invention that he had a rubber stamp made to end all his letters with the words "The spiritual author and (despite many imitators!) still the sole expert in, and practitioner of, twelve-tone music". But Schoenberg got the fame — there were no riches — and the unmemorable pieces here suggest Hauer's obscurity wasn't undeserved. But more striking material from Stefan Wolpe and George Antheil makes this set a worthwhile release.

Alfred Schnittke Cello Concerto No 2/(K)ein Sommernachtstraum CHANDOS 9722 CD

During the 60s and 70s Alfred Schnittke made a living writing film music, where he could usually slip past the Soviet Ministry of Culture the kind of radical procedures they would ordinarily condemn as 'formalist'. The composer wasn't so lucky with his soundtrack for *The Agony* (1974) — the film was banned until 1981. Its theme forms the basis of the long last movement of his 1990 *Cello Concerto No 2*, which runs to 42 minutes in total. This is a dark, hugely orchestrated masterwork from the composer's final and bleakest period. The original soloist was Mstislav Rostropovich, but here the virtuoso is Alexander Ivashkin with The Russian State Symphony Orchestra.

Galina Ustvolskaya The Barton Workshop Plays Galina Ustvolskaya ETCETERA KTC1170 CD

An important reissue of major works by the Russian composer whose output is minimal in more ways than one — just two dozen compositions in a style of unadorned lines and brutal chords, asserting extremes of dynamics and register with little in between. The Barton Workshop emphasise the brutalist qualities of her work, and include *Symphony No 4* and *Piano Sonata No 5* from the 1980s, plus earlier pieces. Though she's becoming more widely known, her first recordings only began to appear in the last decade, so there's a lot of catching up to do.

Iannis Xenakis Kraanerg ETCETERA KTC1075 CD

Xenakis described himself as 'a classical Greek living in the 20th century'. As with so much of his output, *Kraanerg* is both aggressively modern and fearsomely primeval. One of his least known compositions, it's virtually the only one to combine tape music and live performance. This reissue from 1988 features the original tape, which Xenakis said was produced in a private studio under very difficult circumstances — "I should do another". So far, however, you have to live with the rather muffled tape part to experience one of Xenakis's most awesome creations.

in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

The Arsonists Pyromaniax/In Your Town MATADOR OLE344 12"
Stealing phrases and cadences from A Tribe Called Quest, KRS-One and Funky Four + 1 among others, The Arsonists show that you don't have to wear furs or gold or sample *Annie* to move the crowd "In Your Town" is one of those classic Onyx-type group dynamics tracks that works purely on its collective male energy, where everyone jumps up and down and pushes each other out of the way to get in the spotlight "Pyromaniax" is a verbal highwire act in which The Arsonists play Keystone Cops over a beat straight from the big top

City Boy Players The Love, Love, Love EP SSR/CRAMMED SSR214 2x12"
The first half of this double 12" EP is the finest disco platter you'll hear all year Brother Of Soul's Philly Mix of "Love Love, Love" is a gorgeous, uplifting confection of string swirls, an impossibly fat bassline, Rhodes sweetening and a monolithic beat that's a testament to everything Gamble & Huff and Dexter Wansel stood for Paul Hunter's mix, meanwhile, is a talisman of 'taste and refinement, but manages to be soothing without being smarmy In this company, "Get Ma' People" transcends its Al Jarreau scatting to create a groove that makes its facile message seem plausible The second 12" is a nice rapprochement between House and Techno, and the BDs street funk they tried to replace but not quite the disco epiphany of the first half

Common & The 45 King Car Horn GROOVE ATTACK GAP046 12
The return of Mark 45 King features one of the funkiest HipHop beats imaginable — a loping, off-kilter shuffle that goes back to the days when funky meant greasy and stinky not David Axelrod and Jeff Lorber The beat may be too much though because the usually impeccable Common isn't quite as graceful as usual Nevertheless his lyrics are on point and this 12" is well worth your shekels

Deadly Avenger/Jadell/ Bronx Dogs/Pepe Deluxe Battlecreek EP ILLICIT RECORDINGS ILL12003 12"
Deadly Avenger's sources may be hopelessly obvious, but he puts his bricolage together with such attention to forward motion that they come screaming out of your speakers "The Brawl" is no different from his past Old School pastiches, although it is slightly less funky and a bit more direct Jadell is a bit more knowing, and thus more annoying than Deadly Avenger but "Come On And Get Some" at least has the good taste to sample Grupo Folklorico Y Experimental Nuevayorquino's "Anabacoa" On the flip Bronx Dogs come over all Mutt Lange and try to get the terraces to chant their name while Finns Pepe Deluxe serve up a track that's grating on one listen and supercool on another

Erion Erion BROOKLYN BEATS NO NUMBER CD
The work of one Criterion Thornton, this rather good collection of abstract electronics gets a leg up on the competition by actually daring to engage with the real world Unlike too many of his contemporaries Thornton realises the potential of samplers and drum programming to create stark, vital politically charged music without resorting to hectoring or self-righteousness Thus the excellent "Silencio" — an agglomeration of submarine noises, flamenco percussion and a Linton Kwesi Johnson sample — was inspired by living in a squat in Spain *"fighting post-Franco fascism"* while the harsh balafonics of "Fingerless" are a reaction to the genocide in Rwanda Elsewhere, Urbane" is a dub cut-up of a Manning Marable lecture and "Mejilla" restructures drum 'n' bass as a "Battle Hymn Of The Republic" for the digital age

The Fantastic Four The Fantastic Four EP Part II The Heroes Return CATSKILLS RID009 12"
Featuring The Mexican, Bushy & Professor, Sonorous Star and Zero Theory, this EP might have all the usual meaty beaty, big and bouncy cliches but it is mindlessly refreshing summertime fun nevertheless The Mexican's "Yogurt Mudflaps" is a pretty average collage of Old School samples scratching and a stiff beat, but Bushy & Professor's "Periscope D Amour" fleshes out its facile beat with cleverly organised wah-wah riffs scratches and flute solo Zero Theory's "Mysterious/Beautiful" is a HipHop savant's take on primitivism with a classic beat doodled over by harpischords dust Middle Eastern horns and antique klezmer records

The Herbaliser Missing Suitcase NINJA TUNE PROMO CD/12"
"Missing Suitcase" is a fine, if slight spy beat number The mighty DJ Craze, however turns it into, first, a gurgling baby finger-painting with the flute riffs and bassline and then the best turntable dub since DJ Disk's *Ancient Termites* For those who like their funk uncut, there are two mixes of "When I Shine" — smooth HipHop featuring Philly's Bahamadia who's *"never truant from her school of thought"*

Lootpack Sound Pieces — Da Antidote STONES THROW/GROOVE ATTACK GA042 CD
Part of the Likwit Crew Lootpack are associates of Peanut Butter Wolf They're not afraid to admit that they still go to open mic nights to keep their flows tight, they turn the "Crate Digga" into a superhero and they *"break MCs on contact"* by using the *"laws of Physics"* Although it ties MCs Wildchild and Madlib in knots the production on "Friends Vs Ends" is a killer cut-up of a Rare Groove track

Nightmares On Wax Finer WARP WAP123 CD 12"
Although George Evelyn's original downtempo rave dream has largely gone up in the smoke of stoner instrumental HipHop, he hasn't completely left the rave behind In among its loping grooves, "Finer" features the kind of elongated pleasure-or-pain diva wail that characterised the days when the rush was both pure terror and pure ecstasy Alex Gopher's spangly disco mix locates the wail's origin in Donna Summer's hypergasms with Giorgio Moroder while NOW seems to find its antecedents in Cher's vocoder

Req/Team Doyobi Split FAT CAT FAT033 12
Zones 13 and 14 of Fat Cat's Split series feature Brighton's HipHop hermit Req and Yorkshire duo Team Doyobi getting jiggy with clicks, glitches scratches and backwards cueing As usual, Req smothers the principles of HipHop in an autistic shroud, drowns beats in murk and grime and undercuts any hint of bombast by cutting back against the grain and reversing his field Team Doyobi, on the other hand, take the opposite approach and try to arrange something vaguely coherent out of sonic litter and bitmaps with varying degrees of success

Roots Manuva Motion 5000/ Skiver's Guide BIG DADA BD011 12"
"Skiver's Guide" is a Big Dada posse cut featuring Roots Manuva Talpanic from Blak Twang Seanie T Robotic EBU and Juice Aleem As you'd expect from British HipHoppers the production is solid if not mindboggling and the flows have as much to do with Barrington Levy as Kool Moe Dee The problem though, is that the only MCs who attack the beat with effective cadences are Roots and Juice Aleem — the rest try to fit too much into a slow beat "Motion 5000" displays Roots Manuva's debt to Method Man, as he rocks another subdued beat showing his *"next type of motion"*

in brief electronica

Reviewed by Matt ffytche

Karl Bartos Electric Music SOUND 0003 CD
Percussionist with Kraftwerk from 1975-90 (post-*Autobahn* but there for *Trans Europe Express*), Karl Bartos 'rediscovered the guitar' while collaborating with Johnny Marr in the mid-90s. Big mistake. Touted as "cleverly combining" electronic pop music with guitar sounds (is that supposed to be a great leap forward?), the album conjures up some of the most mediocre pop of the early 80s: imagine Gary Numan crossed with Sheena Easton. If this wasn't crime enough against the spirit of Kraftwerk, Bartos has also discovered that he didn't have to make a statement in his music but could write simply about love — cue tracks such as "Sunshine" and "Friends".

Anthony Child & Andrew Read/Speedranch^Jansky Noise Sixth Virus Landscapes Of The Dream FAT CAT PROMO 12"
Fat Cat continues its limited edition Virus series of 12" records pairing different artists. On one side Anthony Child (aka Surgeon) and Andrew Read collaborate on "Guitar Treatments 6 And 7" to produce Main-style spaced out, growling low end drones that are cavernous and slowly changing, full of gongs and crackles. But their second track shifts to more portentous tonal atmospherics, with shades of Klaus Schulze hovering over massed synthesizers. On the flip, Speedranch jams with Jansky Noise on a grainy, Garagey scrambled egg of a track: an anarchic ungroove that gets detuned, de-speeded, cut, scratched and choked, followed by sirens hovering and wailing in different directions, while the track squeals, sputters and shorts. Sonic fireworks.

Dettinger Intershop KOMPAKT 2 CD
Cologne's Olaf Dettinger does a nice line in oozy, shimmering drones with oblique looped beats, sculpted out of crisp scraping and dragging sounds. As Dettinger notes: "It's that rustling and crackling which sets you free." The emphasis here is on the Ambient colours — slices of mood stretched out into hypnotic aural patterns with a delicate organic swell sometimes like a blurry harmonium chord. Chill out music, teetering on the edge of fade out, its mirage of activity is kept at just the right level to sustain the attention.

Freeform Me Shape SPRAWL SP029 CD
Unlike in Germany, where they take these things more seriously perhaps, UK post-Techno musicians keep settling on an ironic bandwidth running between kitsch and cheese. Still, there's whimsy and there's more coherent crankiness, like Simon Pyke's blurry, deranged squeezebox sounds and devious Latin percussion. Think of a more clunky and plaintive Plug with weird, droid basslines and Brazilian rhythms. Nana Vasconcelos has been been captured by PlayStation robots and hidden in a Lego castle. See if you can find him.

Hidenobu Ito Bedroom In The Cage EP NS COM PROMO CD
Ito collages meditative guitar riffs, fairy tale electronic tinkles and spurious 'droid-like noises. With elements of Jim O'Rourke perhaps, a simple guitar music jostles with stranger sonic regions and bursts of electronic interference. "Heaven" tweaks a jazzy acoustic ballad with husky, Tom Jobim-like vocals in Japanese, using tweeting birds and telephonic beeps. Elsewhere, rhythmic grooves evolve haphazardly. Drum 'n' bass is blended with a soft flute-like ensemble that sounds like it is being ground out through a barrel organ. "Memory Of Sound" sounds like a Jobim arrangment of Otomo Yoshihide.

Bill Laswell & Pete Namlook Psychonavigation 4 FAX +46-49/450464 CD
The best of the latest batch of releases from Pete Namlook's Fax machine. Laswell's presence on bass makes this a tauter, more poised and punched affair than Namlook's usual reverberant drift, though the shimmering major chord sunsets on the synthesizer are still there, of course. Laswell has his New Age side too: bringing in 'ethnic' drum patterns, viols and opaque vocal samples to add greater theatricality and musical reference to Namlook's spacy horizons. A strung out head trip, detached, seamless and soaring — like taking the autobahn to Glastonbury.

Mouse On Mars Distroia EP ROUGH TRADE GERMANY RTD195361.03 CD
Mouse On Mars Pickly Dred Rhizzoms EP SONIG 05 12"
If you were worried German Techno was starving itself on a bread and water diet, MOM's new double pronged attack will chase away any anaemic anomie. The way they trample headlong over established dance genres is rarely less than life-affirming. "Distroia"'s title track overwrites Jungle's two-step with beats like squished beetles, while its superb "Super Sonig Fadeout" mix is cluttered, junk-filled Garage. When they twist the Kompakt backbeat into a kind of hysterical ska ("Yippie" and, from the Sonig 12", "Shamp Hare Rama"), comedy threatens, but there's always a dislocating system crash waiting round the corner. *(Rob Young)*

Plaid Rest Proof Clockwork WARP 63 CD
Difficult to fault this bright and breezy assortment of grooves, half-grooves and passing ideas. Plaid's eclecticism emerges as a consequence of their abilities as producers, rather than a headless rummaging around for content. Their pleasant vignettes have a light, well-ordered touch that's catchy rather than captivating. Simple but upbeat arrangements draw lightly on HipHop and drum 'n' bass but are equally happy stepping out into pseudo-Mediterranean folk instrumental, 60s spy theme eerieness, Yazoo-like electro, shades of gamelan and an achingly melodic string quartet segue into a stylophone solo. All quite friendly, but sometimes the result is a bite-sized world of musical ideas.

Potuznik Concorde+ CHEAP FIVE CD
Potuznik has gathered Viennese colleagues such as Ramon Bauer, Florian Hecker, Patrick Pulsinger and Peter Rehberg (aka Pita) to create "the last valid concept album of the millennium". A strange mixture of styles, described as a 70s idea, 80s influences and 90s techniques, produces at times a stylish hybrid of No Wave electronics. Bleached and scorched electronic sounds — nothing too spiky — are played in a kind of garage rock syntax of fuzzy repeating riffs. Other tracks remind me of Blancmange or early 80s synthesizer pop with Teutonic, blankly voiced lyrics, or play with indecisive beatbox pulsions. The musical tracks alternate with Berlin-based singer/songwriter turned author Max Goldt reading his own Baillardesque existential sci-fi text in English with strangely drawling and alien emphases, while Hecker supplies unobtrusive atmospherics. Crowded, mixed, bizarre.

The Rekreators This Is Where We Grow Teeth SILADI SIL009 12"
Icy, sandpaper oscillations filtered out of existence, slow, dubby beats and a leisurely gouging of bass notes, burning wormholes beneath overdriven turbojet whines — this compressed and distorted illbient draws more on early 70s Kluster than the New York scene. Worth pursuing. The Rekreators are a complex gathering of talents spread out around San Francisco, Denver and elsewhere, forming the Siladi collective. Here they have reworked a couple of tracks, keeping the overdriven textures and adding some of the dystopian bleakness and morphed voices of early Techno.

Si-{cut}.db Rate Of Living SPRAWL IMPRINT SP030 CD
Douglas Benford's work, which has been compared to a calmer, less flashy or goofy Luke Vibert, hasn't grabbed me in the past. Melodic synth finger exercises with cheap home organ sounds and funky jingling beatwork make for a nice enough filler music. The rhythms are snappy, though the beats don't work particularly hard, and there's an emphasis on childlike colours — sounds like toy xylophones, glockenspiels, or soft steel drum melodies. Touching on chill out style melancholy or clean lounge flavours, the track title "Spectral Softwave" describes the album better than "Tidal Pranks".

Spacetime Continuum Double Fine Zone ASTRALWERKS ASW6238 CD
Those eerie suspended chords, now indelibly associated with Techno, are here lifted out of context as a background for moody sax smoke rings. Actually there's more of a mixture in Jonah Sharp's music here — soulful vibes and harmonica mix with simple backbeats and warm spacy tones occasionally taking off with more of a Techno drive. This is not the only recent disc to attempt a freeform crossover between Techno and 70s electric organ-driven jazz and fusion. Is this a generational thing? It still doesn't quite hang (or fall apart) for me, though this one manages to wrongfoot itself inventively enough now and then.

Voltaic Shockwave ELECTRO CHEMICAL RESEARCH BN508LC06832 CD
Grey monotonal but Acidic Illbient from Alexis Charalambous. Breathy drones seep behind viscous beats and repetitive riffs on primitive synthesizers surrounded by small flurries of sci-fi sounds. Sci-fi with a theistic edge, though, as track titles such as "Solaris" and "Monolith" seem to hint. The music is insistent and dour, with its relentless motorik pistons, although strangely the synth tones start to conjure up a grey martial disco, with shades of Donna Summer, even. "Shockwave" is cramped and repetitive like Jeff Mills, but with Visage-like atmospheric chords sweeping in. This retro sound is perhaps closer to some of the sombre but abstract 80s-style electropop Techno presently coming out of Russia.

WANG Inc WANG Inc SONIG 04 12"
Described as a 'corporation of sound research', Bartolomeo 'Bart' Saler's WANG Inc manages to cram many good things onto this 12" mainly by introducing a few locked groove tracks. So the first item, sounding like a loop of crackling polystyrene, won't take you any further than the edge of the vinyl. Drawing on interests in Russolo and musique concrete, Saler makes music out of sounds captured from industrial materials, here concentrating on plastic and metal. He produces tinny mechanical noises and springy emphatic loops, like fingers drumming on plastic. Minimalist, but more prickly and concrete than Sahko's Philus, some of this is close to the experiments of Matmos, adding bass and beats but in interrupted, mis-grooved rhythms. □

in brief jazz

Reviewed by **Julian Cowley**

Noël Akchoté J'En Doute Encore STUPEUR & TROMPETTE! ST1D15 CD
Self-reflexive sketches from guitarist Akchote and friends. Pared down improvisations using guitar, keyboard and percussion meld with collaged voices, typewriter, gurgling baby and kitsch electronic gadgetry. All is carried along buoyantly within textures and rhythmic structures sanctioned long ago by the Rock In Opposition axis. Indeed, keyboardist Jo Thirion was formerly a member of Etron Fou Leloublan.

Fred Anderson Trio Live At The Velvet Lounge OKKA DISK OD12023 CD
Okka Disk continues to demonstrate that Chicago has seized the initiative in channelling energy into the creation of meaningful jazz. Importantly, it acknowledges the continuing contribution of veterans such as Joe McPhee and, in this instance, saxophonist Fred Anderson. Now 70, Anderson's profile has remained lower than those of other founding members of the AACM, but on this set, recorded last year at the club he runs to make ends meet, his gnarly playing still grips the attention with its muscle and urgency. He flourishes in the best of company: percussionist Hamid Drake and bassist Peter Kowald. The outcome is musicianship that matters.

Asian American Jazz Orchestra Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire ASIAN IMPROV AIR0045 CD
Jon Jang Self Portrait ASIAN IMPROV AIR0050 CD
The Asian American Jazz Orchestra remembers the experience of Japanese-American internees during the Second World War, and acknowledges the importance of jazz in sustaining collective identity. Recollections of swing provide the centre of gravity but ripples extend back to gagaku music and forward to Coltrane. The set concludes with pianist Jon Jang's assertive composition "Reparations Now!"

Jang's solo recording carries plaudits from novelist Maxine Hong Kingston and drummer Max Roach. It is not difficult to perceive parallels between Jang's playing and Hong Kingston's prose style, both combine brittle delicacy with sinewy coarseness. It is more difficult to endorse Roach's view that Jang is a truly original voice. There is much that seems familiar in his affirmations of Chinese-American identity, especially when he turns from his own compositions to impose an Eastern gloss on "Amazing Grace" and "You'll Never Walk Alone".

Jim Dvorak & Eric Mingus This Isn't Sex SLAM 504 CD
Eric Mingus's phrasing on "Feel Good Factor" is reminiscent of Jack Kerouac's bar-room meditations. But here there's no Steve Allen to distract with cocktail tinklings, rather, Mingus on ancestral bass, and Jim Dvorak's urbane trumpet. It's poetry and jazz comparable to less equivocal couplings Amiri Baraka with David Murray, Ishmael Reed with Kip Hanrahan, Gil Scott-Heron with Brian Jackson. Arch and quizzical, impassioned and ironic, with a tender rendition of Pete Townshend's "Baba O'Riley", just to keep you guessing.

Markus Eichenberger & Fredi Lüscher Eulengesange Vols 1/2 ALTRI SUONI AS040/AS041 2xCD
Clarinettist Eichenberger's two volumes of 'owl songs' were recorded in Zurich in September 1997. Not a lot of hooting, but crisp improvisational dialogues inclining towards a pointillistic approach. Pianist Lüscher is teasingly allusive, but more generally it sounds as if the players' awareness of jazz tradition has been pulverised, with the particles now held in conservatory suspension. Percussionist Ivano Torre proves an equally sympathetic collaborator, with comparably restrained, yet knowing, results.

Guillermo Gregorio Trio Red Cube(d) HATOLOGY 531 CD
There are pieces by Red Norvo and Fletcher Henderson on *Red Cube(d)*, and tributes to saxophonists Lester Young and Chu Berry. On the surface a departure, but in fact the music conforms to Gregorio's customary chaste elegance. He plays clarinet and tenor, with Pandelis Karayorgis on piano and Mat Manen on electric violin. References abound, fleeting glimpses of jazz history within contexts of sparse abstract composition. The precision and poise of the trio's performance create a remarkable sense of weightlessness.

Mats Gustafssou The Education Of Lars Jerry XERIC XER100 CD
Swedish saxophonist Gustafsson recorded this explosive solo set in a Chicago art gallery, with Jim O'Rourke overseeing the recording process. No melodies, but percussive popping, raucous shrieks, strangulated cries and slabs of rasping noise, which leave no doubt why Thurston Moore finds Gustafsson a viable collaborator. Even when the saxophonist lays aside his baritone and tenor and takes up a flageolet, he sustains the momentum of a gargantuan performance in the spirit of Ayler and Brötzmann.

Otto Lechner & Max Nagl En Passant RUDE NOISES 006 CD
En Passant is the sound of time passing in Munich. Actually, it is music to accompany a documentary film on that theme. Saxophonist Nagl and pianist Lechner veer, in brief lyrical evocations of changing mood, from tranquil contemplation to animated scurry. These are snapshots rather than elaborate portraits, but within the parameters set by the nature of the project the duo performs with frothy verve.

Living Daylights 500 Pound Cat LIQUID CITY LQC39353 CD
Funky and sprightly at the same time, the music of this Seattle trio overflows with unselfconscious enjoyment. Drummer Dale Fanning has the purposeful directness of a good rock drummer. Bassist Arne Livingston who has performed with Joshua Redman, adds boisterous virtuoso bounce. Jessica Lurie, on alto and tenor sax, is eloquently exuberant, brimming with confidence built during her time as soloist with The Berkeley Symphony and through her work with Amy Denio and Wayne Horvitz. Seriously uplifting music, which invites admiration as much as it makes you feel good.

Lauren Newton/Patrick Scheyder/Vladimir Tarasov Altered Egos OMBA 004 CD
As the title suggests, this Japanese release features collective improvisation involving a high level of refined interaction. Vocalist Newton, best known for her work with Vienna Art Orchestra, displays a formidable technical range, more impressive because her performance appears effortless. There is no straining for flamboyant effect in her singing, just agile control of an extensive repertoire of expressive sounds. Parisian pianist Scheyder, who has worked with composer and trombonist Vinko Globokar, is equally disciplined and subtle, and there are few more shrewd and responsive percussionists than former Ganelin Trio member Tarasov.

Power Trio Power Trio ASIAN IMPROV AIR040 CD
Power Trio are bassist Tatsu Aoki and drummer Afifi Phillard, with Mwata Bowden on a range of wind instruments. Recorded two years ago at Unity Temple, Illinois, this recording shows the trio to be a solid driving outfit. They don't overwhelm, as their name suggests they might, but cruise convincingly through four originals. Aoki is primarily a timekeeper. Phillard is equally reliable and metrically flexible, while Bowden is appealingly forthright, especially on baritone.

Bhob Rainey The Withered Grasses TAUTOLOGY 007 CD
By comparison with last year's corrosive *Ink*, Rainey's latest offering seems benign, at times even meditative, but it is nonetheless a powerful document. It demonstrates once again his utterly distinctive approach to playing soprano saxophone, an intensely physical determination to take the instrument beyond all obvious limits. He works outside of idiom, pummelling a column of breath, eliciting refracted tones, overblowing ferociously. Closer to Antonin Artaud than Sidney Bechet.

Mario Schiano/Giancarlo Schiaffini/Bruno Tomasso (To Be Continued...) DISCOTECA DI STATO DDS981 CD
As mainstays of The Italian Instabile Orchestra, saxophonist Schiano, trombonist Schiaffini and bassist Tomasso are eminent presences in European improvised music, but here they restore their trio identity as Gruppo Romano. The recording, made in February 1998 under the aegis of the Italian National Sound Archive, was convened to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Schiano's entrance into jazz. The weight of cumulative experience can dull improvisatory edge, but their shared musical understanding, refined from free jazz into something at once rarefied and intimate, has clearly lost none of its vitality and inventiveness.

Ted Sirota's Rebel Souls Propaganda NAIM 036 CD
Drummer Sirota plays a discreet role in this project, allowing his Chicago Underground affiliates plenty of space to stretch out. Rob Mazurek on cornet, Noel Kupersmith on bass, Jeff Parker on guitar, plus Kevin Kizer on tenor assume the guise of Rebel Souls for a relaxed run through the stylistic gamut available to such a combination. As the compendium extends from shuffling bluebeat, through light bop, free jazz and the cool, a suspicion of pastiche becomes difficult to avoid. There are fine moments, especially from Mazurek, but beside the recent Chicago Underground Trio album, *Possible Cube*, this shapeshifting seems relatively inconsequential.

Markku Veijonsuo Karakara SILENCE SLC003 CD
Karakara opens with a fogbound steamer in a fjord soundscape, the languid hallmark of jazz from Europe's far North. But things get altogether more lively as Finn Veijonsuo growls through his trombone with a good-humoured ferocity worthy of the great Ellingtonian trumpeter Bubber Miley. Elsewhere, Albert Mangelsdorff's multiphonic technique is an obvious point of reference. Veijonsuo is an articulate and imaginative musician, whether simply soloing or orchestrating his blowing within varied live electronic settings.

in brief outer limits

Reviewed by **David Keenan**

All Time Present All Time Present BOTTOM FEEDER BF03 CD
Chris Forsyth's improvisations with companions Rich Gross and Ethan Sklar are firmly anchored by the sound of stretched steel strings. No tonal washes or FX swill here: the trio dares to deal in actual *notes* and speedy melodic sleight of hand. Their sound suggests the legendary but still unpublished Loren MazzaCane Connors/John Fahey session. Beneath keening folds of feedback skulks the ghostly guitar shapes of Faust's "Jennifer" and the simple, bubbling leads of Can's Michael Karoli.

Atman Tradition ORUNKEN FISH OFR40 CD
From Poland, Atman are a forest music collective, who are involved in the Eastern European 'deep ecology' movement. Their devotional folk rises above the inevitable crusty cliches, drawing on acid guitar, dulcimers, lutes and throat singing to create an elemental, throbbing music of otherworldly majesty. On their second, readily available long player they've been joined by Anna Nacher on vocals, whose eerie voice has the presence of Patti Smith. Mercifully, not a dreadlock in sight.

Coil Obsidian Monarch/Null Tributary BRAINWASHEO 001 7"
Edward Ka-Spel Share The Day BRAINWASHEO 002 7"
Specialising in such fringe groups as Nurse With Wound and Current 93, Brainwashed have hosted some of the best official Websites around. These singles mark the launch of their own record label. The Coil release consists of two remixes by New York based electronic artist Thread. "Null Tributary" dredges "Dark River", the slow-panning soundtrack piece that concludes side one of 1991's *Love's Secret Domain* album, and reconfigures it as an ever accelerating chase beneath neon streetlights. "Obsidian Monarch" builds on the subtle, associative imagery of "Glowworms/Waveform", from last year's *Summer Solstice* EP, and increases the drama with orchestral pumps and fills.
The second release features Edward Ka-Spel, vocalist in experimental oddballs Legendary Pink Dots, duetting with a mysterious female vocalist on a disturbing slice of vicious Euro-decadent cabaret.

Deison & Thurston Moore G Neurus/Super Tuscan LOUD/SIN ORGANISATION SINORG04 7"
This ultra-limited collaborative release between two Italian noise labels locks Italian tapenoise nut Deison in a head to head with Thurston Moore, who is lovingly addressed here as "the good uncle". Deison's cement mixer approach to loops and interference brings to mind Lydia Lunch's fantastic description of Sonic Youth: "I think hurricanes, volcanoes, storms." With his hand on the tremolo, Moore triggers frantic ripples of feedback and hiss. The other side features Deison's "Deisonic Remix", which is 60 seconds of ludicrous guitar-piled collage.

Dissecting Table Life RELEASE RR64012 CD
"Ichiro Tsuji has furthered his search for the ultimate truth of the collective human being and has found the answer to be... Life!" Suck on that Schopenhauer! Ichiro has been clowning behind Dissecting Table for 13 years now. He exists in a weird netherworld where the metal-on-metal percussion of dweeb-era Depeche Mode stands as some kind of post-industrial pinnacle: it also says here that he has a "mysterious penchant" for sticking to four tracks on all his releases. The kind of world where this counts as a 'quirk' gives you a clue as to the degree of faceless muscle-flexing going on within.

Mason Jones Midnight In The Twilight Factory MONOTREMATA MONOC001 CD
Hot on the heels of *Within A Golden Moment*, his deep-space guitar duel with Makoto Kawabata of Acid Mothers Temple, Japanese noisewatcher and Chamel Music label boss Mason Jones heads out for some solo guitar action. Two tracks recorded straight to DAT redraw the standard spacerock map only to find the territory pretty much unchanged — except his dreadfully processed guitar that sounds like a cheesy, cosmic synth. On the other two tracks he's accompanied by a guitarist on one and a bassist on the other — but neither of them is capable of provoking a much needed tactical review.

Ian Nagoski Warm Coursing Blood COLORFUL CLOUDS FOR ACOUSTICS CLOUD020 CD
Nagoski is the contributing editor of the US music 'zine *Halana*. Dropping out of high school at 16, he eventually hooked up with *Halana*'s editor-in-chief Chris Rice in the electronic improv group Astronomeous. Journalistic encounters with the likes of Joe Maneri, Pauline Oliveros and La Monte Young resulted in a six month stint for Nagoski at Young's Dream House. On this release he develops his own ultra-primitive approach to minimalist composition using a five dollar signal generator and some abandoned electronics. Relationships of time and space are explored at length in a warm, human environment, where tones merge and disappear without any of the intellectual baggage usually associated with such music.

Steve Roden & Brandon Labelle The House Was Quiet And The World Was Calm MEME MEME014 CD
This new Roden/Labelle collaboration could rank as the most woozily somnambulant release yet from this austere Japanese label. The visual artist Roden has previously worked as in be tween noise and has also recorded under his own name for Bernhard Gunter's Trente Oiseaux label. Labelle makes up half of psychogeographers id battery, whose extended investigations into 'area sonorities' make for eerie late night listening. Together they play a series of quietly intense improvisations, sometimes constructed from small clicks and scrapes emerging from and receding back into silence. Some nice gong-struck passages bring to mind the desolate atmosphere of early Thomas Köner pieces. Their seemingly diffident adventures on the edge of silence are actually totally commanding in the way they focus your listening.

Sunroof! Delicate Autobahn Under Construction VHF 41 2xCD
Consisting of ex-Skullflower/Total guitarist Matthew Bower, Neil Campbell of A Band non-fame and one John Gobert, Sunroof! relocate La Monte Young's seldom heard dream music as the jumping off point into realms of trance, drone and perpetually peaking sound. Over the course of two CDs, the occasionally augmented trio plough through tinkling clouds of minimal hum, with guitar, violin and reeds generating small sea swells of tonal shift and complementary drone. You can hear the early, ecstatic dynamic of The Velvet Underground, the gruff see-sawing of British folk rock and the trance potential of ritual music all coalescing in a thick, murky soup.

Volcano The Bear Yak Folks Y'Are PICKLEDEGG EGG7 LP
The vinyl debut from Leicester's Volcano The Bear serves as an ideal way in to their primitive, non-musicianly universe. After the extended chaos of their limited edition CD-Rs, all fantastic documents of their full-on live shows, the six tracks that make up *Yak Folks Y'Are* sound almost coherent. From the rasping clarinet groove of the opening "Where Are The Bounds?", through the clouded electronics of the This Heat-styled "Blanket Ball", most of their working strategies are covered in handy capsule form.

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Uncertainties are inherent in the physical world and have nothing to do with the skill of the user

the compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

A mystifying compilation-cum-tribute to the "Great Electronic Punks Suicide, ***Clones Of Suicide*** (Sonic Plate SONIC002 CD) appears to be in some way connected to the ¿Los Apson? organisation, a bizarre Tokyo record shop that labels its entire stock in Mexican Spanish. The booklet makes clear that the record was conceived as a tribute, but the listener should take that as a statement of basic direction rather than expecting a rash of "Rocket USA" or "Frankie Teardrop" covers. The closest it gets to a Japanese recreation of the Suicide sound is underground folk god Kan Mikami ranting manically over a straightahead beat and annoying oscillator tones, courtesy of Dub Sonic and Kuknacke. As for the rest, the booklet credits the cream of Japan's what-the-fuck electronica scene: Tag Rag, Transonic, Shi-ra-nui 360. So what you get, more or less, is low key bedroom experimentation on cheap equipment with unexpected juxtapositions, the whole lot interspersed with short, often comically imaginative ads for Tokyo club nights and underground electronica labels. The majority of the groups represented have more of an eye on the brain-wiping annoyance potential of electronic tones than on filling the dancefloor. Zero Gravity/Transonic kingpin Kazunao Nagata completists should note that he contributes a pretty uninspiring track.

Compiled by US 'zine *Interface*, ***Counter Intelligence Subproject 01*** (Electro Chemical Research ECRBN529 CD) is a lively mix drawing on various experimental musics from Aube and Kreidler to the motorik industrial distortions of Monolith and Sonar from Belgium's Daft label, as well as Si-{cut}-db, whose whimsical but funky track adds a refreshing breeziness in this context. Surprisingly it gels well: a surreal roster of isolationist disco. Highlights include Oandy's dry, warped gyrations and high pitched flutey drones, and some unusual vocal tracks. Mimetic Field morph from Gothic dream-like ambience with seductive French mutterings into a jagged, psychedelic drum 'n' bass groove, and Bit-Tonic weave mutated voice samples with soulful avant diva vocalisations over a strangely plodding but jaunty rhythm. These songs from outer planets are well worth sampling.

From Germany's venerable Wergo label ***Riverrun: Voicings Soundscapes*** (Wergo WER6307 2xCD) is an invaluable and varied compendium of idiosyncratic sound art. The two CDs contain 60 tracks, most lasting for around two minutes. Not really a sampler (though several tracks can be found on releases from Wergo's Ars Acustica series), nothing lasts long enough to give more than an impression. The first disc is subtitled "Voicings". Kurt Schwitters's Dada classic "Sonate In Urlauten" gets a computer-controlled transplant by 'intermedia' artist Stephan Von Huene. Sorrel Hays's "Celebration of NO" is 35 seconds of the word "No" spoken in 21 languages by 21 female voices. Sometimes you have to laugh. Carlfriedrich Claus's "Soundaggregate" begins with what sounds like a giant amplified sneeze: the poet and artist compares his "body exercises" to karate. The second disc is subtitled "Soundscapes" and includes soundsculptor Bill Fontana's "Soundbridge Cologne-San Francisco", the first intercontinental sound sculpture with simultaneous broadcast of fog horns at the Golden Gate, trains in Cologne and the tides of the Pacific. Other pieces come from John Cage, Alvin Curran, R Murray Schafer, Mauricio Kagel and Pierre Henry.

Anyone looking to make a summer border crossing into America's reborn HipHop nation should hitch a ride on the back of three new collections which attempt to freezeframe for a moment the current state of talk 'n' turntablism. Between them ***Rawkus Presents Soundbombing II*** (Rawkus P250069 CD), ***Loid In Full*** (Blackberry BLK009 CD) and ***Tags Of The Times Version 2.0J*** (Mary Joy Recordings MKCM 1004 CD) contain over 60 tracks that zoom in on a host of DJs and MCs at the height of their superpowers. All three stand as invaluable snapshots of an area of music currently overflowing with ideas, but if you go for only one, try *Soundbombing*: 27 tracks mixed down into one long funk-flow by The Beat Junkies' Babu and J-Rocc.

As far as HipHop goes, The Beat Junkies are turntablism's tightrope walkers, cutting and cross-fading on the brink of the beat. The tracks on ***Turntable Solos*** (Amoebic AMO-VA-01 CD) by contrast sound like they have already fallen into the abyss, foregrounding the kind of needle-noise that serves as mere dressing on a Beat Junkies track. Released by Sachiko M's Japanese Amoebic label and featuring tracks by Christian Marclay, Otomo Yoshihide, Merzbow, Crawling With Tarts, Martin Tetreault and 10 other gramophone abusers drawn from all points of the compass, *Turntable Solos* is the sound of the record player wreaking havoc in the silent spaces of the digital age. *Reviewed by Alan Cummings, Matt ffytche, Andy Hamilton and Tony Herrington*

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Labels

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Description Obdurate niche for post-Impulse! free jazz, from knotty small-group entanglements to full-on blazing blowouts
Brief history Conceived in 1996 along with the Fire In The Valley Festival as an outlet for undocumented free jazz and Improv artists Our preference is for music of an obstinate or unfashionable nature We are interested in essence before form
Statement of intent The animal you wanted that couldn't get into the world
Other activities Directing the Conway New Music Society, a grassroots caper which has presented world class music across all genres in Western Massachusetts and beyond since 1995
Future plans A Fred Anderson/Kidd Jordan/William Parker/Hamid Drake multi-disc set recorded at various concerts in New England this year, Jemeel Moondoc & William Parker New World Pygmies duo project, Alan Silva Celestial Communications Orchestra 1999, Raphe Malik Octet; Borah Bergman spoken word CD, Tom Bruno White Boy Blues solo project, more select reissues, a Test tour for Autumn 99
Choice cut William Parker *Through Acceptance Of The Mystery Peace*

(Info and manifesto Michael Ehlers)

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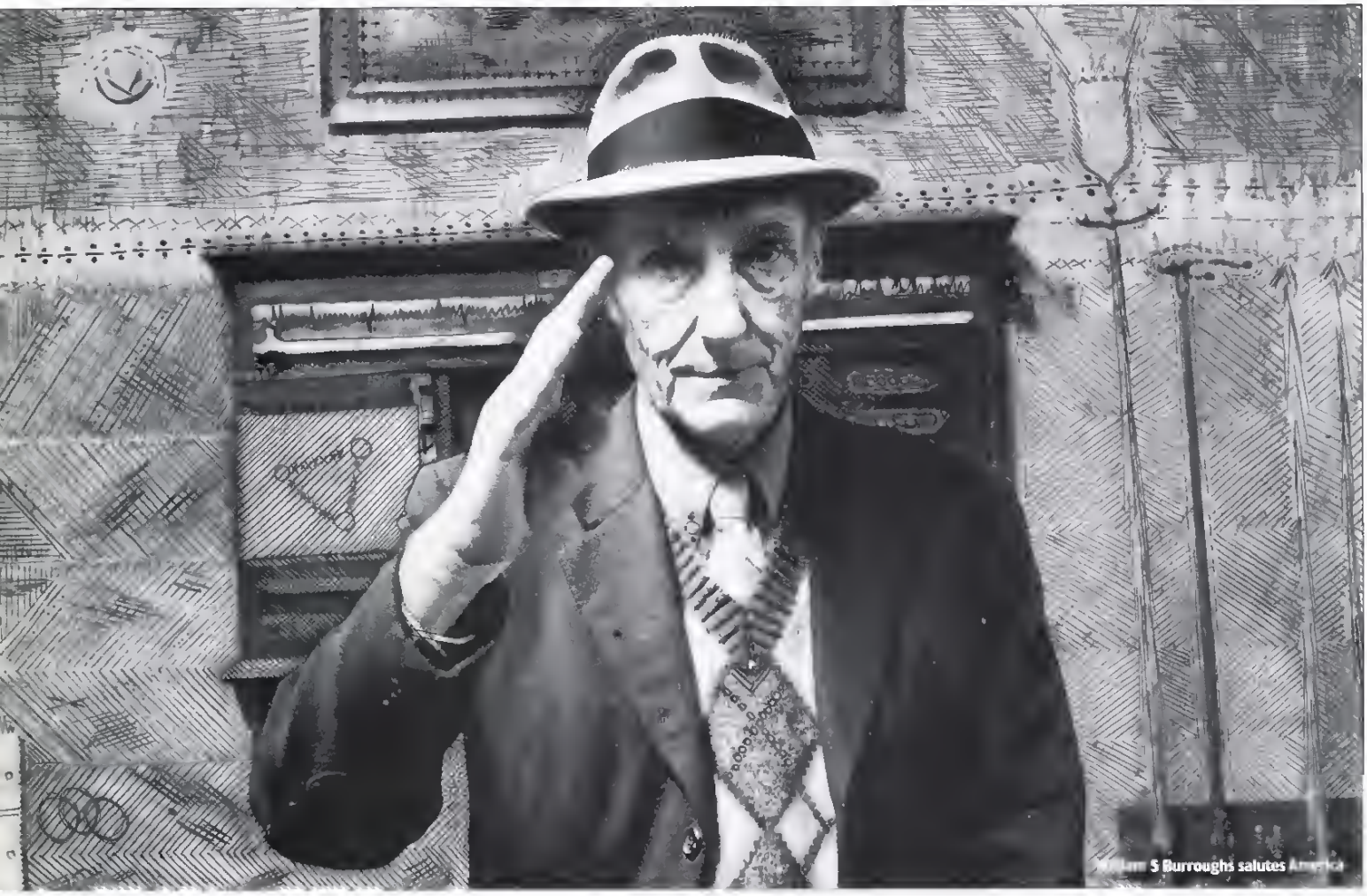
New music books read, raved about, roughed up



William S Burroughs salutes America

PHOTO: THOMI WROBLEWSKI

This Is The Beat Generation
By James Campbell
SECKER & WARBURG HBK £16.99

Screaming With Joy: The Life Of Allen Ginsberg
By Graham Caveney
BLOOMSBURY HBK £20

The Priest They Called Him: The Life And Legacy Of William S Burroughs
By Graham Caveney
BLOOMSBURY PBK £12.99

Allen Ginsberg and William S Burroughs checked out of the Beat Hotel for good in 1997 almost 30 years after frere Jack Kerouac took his last joy-kicks in the darkness

So that was the Beat G[illegible] what exactly? Damned if I [illegible] never really had a shared ma[illegible] and they only shared each other s beds for so long they were separated by politics and religion, when they weren't oceans apart and they only tenuously constitute a generation in terms of age 12 years separated Burroughs and Ginsberg who in turn was four years younger than Kerouac But taken together their writings hold up as the most significant body of delinquent and dissident literature this century though the works of Kerouac who was 47 when he died in 1969 seem most firmly tied to 40s and 50s America when most of them were written Which isn t to say they have dated the best of Kerouac the spontaneous bop prosodies of *On The Road* *Doctor Sax* and *Big Sur* and the experimental rhapsodic *Visions Of Cody* is still [illegible] while his occasional lapses [illegible] mawkish sentiment his seriously awry beatification of dirtpoor Mexican and Black American lives) are just as difficult to swallow now as they ever were

The weight of their respective legacies is undeniable but it s not because they are all towering literary geniuses that the publishing world has declared open season on them More than their writings it is the scandalous nature of their lives their loves and their drugs and their continuing influence on every subsequent youth movement from hippie through punk and Industrial to the cut-ups of HipHop and rap that sustains such a feeding frenzy

These three volumes follow two recent debunkings of the Kerouac myth Because their lives were so interwoven they inevitably cover much of the same ground Of the three, [illegible] s Campbell s decent digest of the available accounts is, paradoxically the most focused His book opens in 1944 the year Beat's Holy Trinity first came together in New York and closes with Ginsberg s and Burroughs s courtroom victories over attempts to ban *Howl* and *Naked Lunch* on the grounds of obscenity Madness brought on by an inability to cope with the conformity of 40s America is the one thing the trinity had in common the story of the Beats is essentially how through their writings, they variously came — via the visions brought about by the deliberate derangement of their senses — to reverse-diagnose their respective conditions as symptoms of the Atomic Age American sickness With a healthy dose of scepticism that every so often turns snide at Kerouac s expense Campbell traces the courses of their madness(es) across continents and through

their networks of relationships most specifically with Beat s two holiest sinners Herbie Huncke and Neal Cassady Yet for all Campbell's storytelling skills aside from a few interesting etymologies he makes no new connections

Even so his history has the jump on Graham Caveney's two studies of which the Burroughs volume is a paperback reprint The big sell on these overdesigned and overpriced picture-heavy books makes grand claims about Caveney s original research into his subjects If it unearthed any new findings, he s kept them extremely well hidden Undeniably pretty to look at they are nevertheless a piss-poor pair of works in which cheaply spun paradoxes are passed off with a flourish as new insights His prose is a slick horrible amalgam of shallow colour supplement journalism and hip college prof bullshit If you can keep from barfing when you read self-regarding phrases like "My project is (from his introductory outline to Ginsberg) then perhaps you are on the wrong road

BIBA KOPF

TechGnosis: Myth, Magic & Mysticism In The Age Of Information

By Erik Davis

SERPENT S TAIL PBK £14 99

When enlightened' digerati like Nickel-Arse Negroponte paint the silicon age lifestyle as being all for the best in the best of all virtual worlds they are in fact fixing a smooth plastic fascia over the twisted and rough-soldered interior of technology s roots So runs the subtext of *TechGnosis* the first full length work by Erik Davis a writer, lecturer and self-appointed occult historian of the electromechanical age Living on America s West Coast (which gives him a hawk s eye view of that region's fomenting brew of cyber-altruism, nature boy cults and poetic hacker crews), Davis contributes to such liberal-cybernetic publications as *Wired* and *The Village Voice* His years of field research, reassembled in this 350 page work, add up to the basic premise that all advances in technology (a term he applies with a broad brush from the recognised current usage meaning electric/electronic goods and digital hardware/software to "technologies of psycho/spiritual liberation" such as meditation yoga Dianetics) have been floated on a raft of esoteric impulses The trend noticed and unravelled at length is that each successive post-Enlightenment attempt to strip Western progress of its religio-mystical core through advances in learning, rationale and technique, has never managed to shake off an undermining (or enriching whichever way you want to look at it) attendance by a whole galère of sunchasers capital- and small-G gnostics, faeries, sky pilots and silicon gurus Far from being a catalogue of American boomtime crankery though the sheer learning on display here, and the accumulation of relevant detail along the way allows *TechGnosis* to hack a few footholds into hi-tech s protective ice Davis can confidently demystify an opportunistic crank like Scientologist L Ron Hubbard who tried to evade an FDA ban on his brainwashing E-meter by classing it as a 'holy object but he can equally trip you up with a hidden historical thread or an occult revelation Every schoolkid knows Benjamin Franklin was a freemason, but how many in the class realised the term virtual reality was first coined by Antonin Artaud in the midst of a fevered meditation on the alchemy of theatre? Or that Mark Pesce whose VRML programming language helped the Internet shed its text-based deadweight and made it a forest of perceptual devices, moonlights as "a technopagan a goddess-worshipper and occasional partaker of psychedelic sacraments"?

From the mythological Prometheus s fiery kleptomania, Davis materialises a secret history of (Greek word) *techne* the art of craft(iness) that has been put in the service of magically engaging, massaging and deceiving the human mind since we first began recording our doings in those supremely durable and future-proof machines known as books Through religions of the written word (Talmud Kabbala, Bible and Koran) the alphabet's infotech 'boots up the sacred self', forcing a kind of selection pressure on the brain similar to that which information economists believe is occurring in today s deluge of stimuli

Where is music in all this? Surprisingly the most incorporeal of arts gets low airtime in *TechGnosis* An extrapolation on the duality of spirit and soul introduces a notion of sound and some of Davis s best compressed thought "The analog world sticks to the grooves of soul warm, undulating worn with the pops and scratches of material history The digital world boots up the cool matrix of the spirit luminous abstract more code than corporeality The analog soul runs on analogies between things the digital spirit divides the world between clay and information" Genesis P-Orridge s esoterrorist irruptions into "the primal goo of dreams" and Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth s redefinition of TV static as an electric scrying stone are two of the more prominent musical namechecks But there s surely a book in itself waiting to be written here

Just as groups such as Autechre or Coil, operating at the plasma-spraying edge of computer technology, can't avoid imagining their work in terms of sleight of hand or 'solstice magick' electronica is one area where the desire to outreach the body is still being enacted, much as it has been since the trance musics of the Atlas the Congo and Tibet were first engendered millennia ago Where more ephemeral media such as oil paint dance and theatre tend to reach limit states in tragedy entropy and the fleshy or material decomposition of their constituent parts/actors, electronic arts habitually foreground their self-transformative qualities — a new open-endedness characteristic of video sound software and laminal graphic design tools that has been boiled down into a pair of unforgettable ad slogans "Where do you want to go today?" and "Think different" For Davis the failsafe memory banks, instantaneous message-flashes, air and space travel, and the miracle of telepresence in the world of electronic media are the tangible realisation of the dreams of Renaissance alchemists and inventor-magicians such as Paracelsus and Giordano Bruno

Davis's erudition and enormous referential scope transmits clearly through his chummy, non-academic prose Although we should be thankful that this is no clanking post-human thesis at times the singalong style topples over into Disneyworld Plato's view of the human body is seen as 'the slothful bags of fluid and bone we lug about planetside" St Augustine in his pre-conversion state is "yearning for the Platonic rocket-ride" a modern automobile s electronic chips are scattered through the vehicle like chunks of fudge in a tub of Ben & Jerry s Is this the voice of the dumbed down hermeticist? Perhaps but you can understand Davis's desire to keep a distance from some of the places he accesses His conclusions are unfashionably holistic and cautiously optimistic our times may be saturated with an opening of knowledge and a spirit of psychedelic and spiritual quest but you can get locked up for these things (ask Timothy Leary) or worse (ask David Koresh) Like Colin Wilson s 1960s occult/outsider digests this is a passionate synthesis of subjects usually sacrificed on the slab of consensus reality

ROB YOUNG

TechGnostic: Genesis P-Orridge

PHOTO: SIMON WARNER

Jonathan Harvey

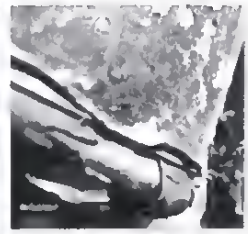
By Amelia Whittall

FABER & FABER PBK £9 99

Technology and Transcendence are the two guiding and often interlocking impulses in Jonathan Harvey's music They are the keys also to the inspirational figure behind Harvey s mature output Stockhausen whose influence is charted in this fascinating composer portrait Harvey refers to him as a "High Modernist" "a composer deep in the European tradition highly emotional but very scientific very rational all at the same time" If at one time his importance was overstated, Harvey points out now he s very definitely underestimated From Stockhausen, he says, he learned to experience intensely the aspects of music as space and as physical sound

If you know Harvey s music, it s no surprise to find this tribute But the interview with the composer which forms half of this short book begins with his first, very important influence His father was a Midlands businessman and amateur composer with advanced tastes such as Scriabin His piano pieces intriguingly, used complex sonorities that he called bell effects A fascination with these is found in Harvey's own music, especially his most well-known electronic piece *Mortuos Plango Vivos Voco*

Though interested in electronic music through Stockhausen Harvey found facilities in Britain unsatisfactory But in 1980 he was invited to work at Pierre Boulez s IRCAM, and



Sampler: Contemporary Music Graphics

Edited by Intro

LAURENCE KING PBK £19.95

Compiled by the London design team Intro this monograph of late 90s album (and single) sleeve art functions on two levels. Featuring artwork drawn from the portfolios of labels such as Warp, 4AD, R&S, Touch, Mute, Blast First, Thrill Jockey, Duophonic, Skin Graft, SYR, Mo'Wax, Ninja Tune, Output and Soul Static Sound, it is a compendium of pornographic eye-candy for the Rough Trade/Other Music set, which attempts to disprove the notion that the death of the 12" vinyl LP, and the parallel rise of the 5" CD precipitated a decline in the sleeve designer's art. Instead, the book maintains that designers have responded to the new, diminished canvases of the 90s with real vigour, customising or bypassing the standard CD jewel case, delving inside it to create ever more elaborate booklets and inserts, and experimenting with alternative packaging materials and mediums. Intro's creative director, Adrian Shaughnessy, contributes a long introductory essay on the history of sleeve art, positioning it in the vanguard of post-war graphic design, and addressing the latest challenges presented to the sleeve designer by new formats such as MiniDisc, DVD and, of course, the World Wide Web.

TONY NERRINGTON

Art that you can wear on your sleeve (top to bottom): DJ Vadim's "Reconstruction Theories Explained" 12", Aphex Twin's "Come To Daddy" CD single, and Pan Sonic's *Self-Assembly Soundscape Set* box set

unlike the critics of the French composer's lavishly state-funded autocracy, he is unreserved in his praise. "IRCAM was a gift from God (in the form of Pierre Boulez!)." *Mortuos Plango*, produced at IRCAM, is based on the unfolding of a bell spectrum, and Harvey explains how the piece modulates between its different transpositions. Bell and vocal sounds are morphed into each other and with their synthetic imitations.

Spectralism, as he calls his approach, has gradually become more central to Harvey's output, and he says it is perhaps the most important musical grammar at the end of this century. As far as I can see, there are many different post-Stockhausen techniques that go under this heading (a different, non-electronic version is found in the work of the Romanian composer Horatiu Radulescu). Maybe it simply refers to a preoccupation with the structure of sound itself, as Harvey suggests: 'There is not very much room for any leftover, anything which isn't spectralism, ultimately spectralism is at the basis of music, it is the nature of sound.' Still, it's a reflection of British conservatism that our most well-known composers tend not to share this intense concern.

Arnold Whittall, in the survey of Harvey's music that follows the interview transcript, puts the issue this way: "At the heart of Harvey's mature musical thinking is the perception that a single sound is at the same time a resonant acoustic complex." This resonance results in both spectral and spiritual exploration. Though he continues to write for Anglican church choirs, Harvey gradually became a Buddhist. He asks: 'What is the purpose of music? It is, in my view, to reveal the nature of suffering and to heal.' Yet in accordance with his faith, his response is rarely angst-ridden. Bhakti is a Hindu term signifying devotion to a god as a path of salvation. It is also the title of one of Harvey's finest pieces, Whittall argues, and definitive evidence of his humane approach to electronic composition. His sensuous music avoids any technology fixation. "The ear is often unsure whether it is hearing tape or live player," writes Whittall.

Harvey has also written an opera, many works for standard classical forces such as string quartet and chamber ensemble, and concertos, including one for cellist Frances-Marie Uitti and, recently, a percussion concerto for Evelyn Glennie. But unusually, maybe uniquely, for a High Modernist composer, he is also committed to improvisation, often working with Uitti (the *Imaginings* album paired his electronics with her cello). This is a facet of Harvey that the book mostly ignores. "What I seek is music that is as fresh as an improvisation and yet has not a sound out of place," he says in the interview, not really a true improvisor's aspiration, since time constraints mean there will be sounds out of place, though I guess here he's talking about his composed works. But otherwise this is a very illuminating book, an essential introduction to the work of one of Britain's most important modern composers.

ANDY HAMILTON

The Day Is So Long And The Wages So Small: Music On A Summer Island

By Samuel Charters

MARION BOYARS PBK £9.95

In 1955 Samuel Charters was a student at the University of California His major was Economics but his passion was music, especially African-American jazz and blues Listening to a selection of singles archived by the Library of Congress, one song in particular stood out seizing his imagination to the extent that visiting the source of the sound became an obsession The song was sung by a group of Bahamian fishermen, who came from Andros, one of the largest and poorest islands that make up the Bahamas Three years after first hearing the song Charters and his partner Ann Danberg set off for Andros, and this book is the recollection of that trip

Charters's book is both beautiful and worrying Its deceptively simple prose recalls the summer he and Danberg spent on Andros the difficulty of reaching the neglected island, the people they met the food they ate, the sharks that nearly ate them and most of all the music the seductive sounds of the island's culture, which took African rhythms and harmonies and wove them through the traditions and narratives of English hymns and folk songs One of the real successes of the book is the way Charters evokes that music celebrates it analyses it, records it on his cumbersome 1950s tape recorder, and above all urges you to seek it out and listen to it (the Smithsonian Folkways label is issuing a CD of the songs with the same title as the book) He is also scrupulous in connecting the music to its cultural context the histories of slavery and poverty that are the backdrop and touchstone of the sounds he loved

Yet there are elements of this fascinating story which are troubling Like any anthropological work where investigators from richer more powerful cultures attempt to unravel the complexities of less privileged peoples there are issues of exploitation and patronage which Charters has the grace to aknowledge but never considers in depth There are ethnic, economic and ideological power dynamics in any project of this kind Charters admits that he was and is in danger of romanticising the poverty of Andros of making a dubious fetish of the supposedly 'uncorrupted' state of its people and culture a fetish reflected in the story's very structure of an escape 'back to paradise' His book belongs to that long and less than noble tradition of white folks foisting on to non-white folks their fantasies of innocence and primitivism a tradition that has its thoughtful and sensitive aspects, this book among them, but also encompasses the condescensions of 'World Music

I don't say this to drape myself in political purity I'm as guilty as any white listener in using black musics as sites of projection and appropriation White ears love to construct Billie Holiday as a patron saint of suffering or Lee Perry as a voodoo shaman we locate notions of 'roots' and 'soul' and 'authenticity' in the great black voices from Howlin' Wolf to Gladys Knight and we are none of us very different from the geeky white dance music producers who wheel on a black diva to give some 'human focus' to their records Even the language we use to express our praise betrays us how many times have white critics called Burning Spear 'majestic', an adjective that roughly translates as 'noble savage'

But what's the alternative? Would it have been preferable for Charters not to have recorded the music of Andros, thereby denying it wider circulation? Should I bin my Thelonious Monk and Big Youth albums my Sylvester and Salt 'N' Pepa singles in case I am listening to them in the 'wrong way'? Turning our white backs on the greatest musics of the 20th century seems unduly self-denying, and what does 'white music' sound like anyway Wagner? Running? The Wurzels? But white involvements with those musics should never delude themselves about the complexities of the consequent relationships complexities which immediately make nonsense of the crashingly crass black/white binary I've employed in this review For all its microscopic focus Charters's beautiful questionable little book is a good springboard for opening up those crucial broader issues

ANDY MEDNURST

Eno thinks about it

Brian Eno: Sonora Portraits 1

Edited by Claudio Chianura & Giampiero Bigazzi

MATERIALI SONORI BOOK/CD

Brian Eno may be popular music's foremost philosopher of sound, but that's not to say he is a very sound philosopher Anyway it is a given that, as a conductor of thought, popular music is somewhat dense, and it is hardly likely to be troubled by a few trifling flaws or inconsistencies in an argument That Eno's wisdoms are often received like tablets from the mount then is hardly his fault He has long since become so used to the sound of his own uninterrupted voice that anyone who nervously forwards the heresy that just this once perhaps he is talking garbage is likely to be lynched Not by Eno who would possibly enjoy more to-and-fro in a discussion, but by his zealous acolytes

Nowadays, interviews with Eno often come out like the one included in *Sonora Portraits*, a package compiled by the Italian Materiali Sonori label and which consists of a bilingual book (well, more an expanded CD booklet, also containing some atmospheric fluff called "Driving" by Fabio Martini Adelio Fuse's "Ambient Music" essay, a hopelessly uninformative chronology and an index of Eno Websites) and a compilation disc focusing on his Ambient music

"Do you believe there might be life on planets other than Earth?" Arturo Stalteri blankly inquires of Brian, presumably because his *Apollo Dreams And Atmospheres* soundtrack qualifies him as an expert on space travel, while his status as an Artist with a capital A puts him on a par with the Creator of the Universe Presented with such a Big Question, a lesser talker might sensibly have begged off replying, but as ever, Eno dignifies it with a considered answer No He goes on to conclude, "I think this is a most important thought for the future because I would like people to understand and to act as if there was nobody else, I mean not only no other great creatures, but no gods, no rules no final realities no absolutes it's just what we make we make the reality and nobody else will make it for us"

In the flesh Eno is always wittier and far more engaging than he comes across in print, where the flatness of the medium has the unfortunate effect of suffocating the spontaneity of his speculations In conversation his ideas inch ahead like a blinded snail gingerly edging its way along the brink of a precipice, only dimly aware of its precarious position as its twitching antennae pull words out of the air In one sense, his interlocuters do Eno no favours in printing his thoughts unexpurgated, but to do otherwise would place greater demands on themselves, as they would have to think their way around the holes in the argument or get back on to Eno's case to seek clarification or qualification of a particular statement

Fortunately for a star like Eno, he is orbited by moon-eyed fan writers who willingly paper over the flaws in his thinking Adelio Fuse's barely adequate "Ambient Music" piece locates this most influential of Eno's achievements within the usual constellation of 20th century avant gardists loosely connecting Erik Satie the Muzak Corporation, John Cage and Steve Reich For newcomers from another planet — oops, sorry I forgot, we are alone in the universe — it might even serve as a useful guide provided they have been innoculated against academic blankness, for this is very much entry level stuff "However, when we speak of environment, what do we mean?" Fuse drones "First of all an environment can be a closed space or on the contrary, an open space "

"Brian Eno is not, as most people believe, a boffin," the chronology concludes "He has very little interest in new technology for its own sake preferring technology that can get a result out of now, this minute, without studying the manual '

Well they've got that much right In the end Eno's genius is his dilettantism which enables him to flit quickly from station to station, switch channels fast, think on the run while all the time crosspatching scientific, technological and artistic disciplines If no one else does, Eno himself must notice the flaws in his logic In the absence of outside challenges, his mistakes are the random elements that stimulate his uniquely Enoid advances

BIBA KOPF

multi media

Stephen Vitiello's art of noises are a movable feast. By Rahma Khazam

Stephen Vitiello

PHOTO OLIVER SCHWADE

"I think a lot about how sound can change one's perception of a space," says New York based composer Stephen Vitiello. Sound's capacity to enhance the listener's perception of an environment is an obsession that percolates into all of Vitiello's many and varied activities. A solo performer, soundtrack composer and installation artist, Vitiello uses a sampler, delay effects and a prepared electric guitar to fashion vivid and highly effective soundscapes which he plays back through judiciously placed clusters of speakers. The installation he presented earlier this year at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon is a case in point: swirling whorls of sonic matter moved in different directions and at different speeds through a small enclosed room affording visitors an intense and surrealistic listening experience. At another recent event he wired an entire venue and its grounds: the trees emitted a processed voice, the floor and chimney rumbled with other occasional voices, while a speaker projected a guitar solo up into the roof of the gazebo, causing the music to expand with the shape of the roof and echo back down. "The organisers feared that sound alone could not do enough to transform the landscape. But in the end they admitted that they had not realised how effective it could be," he remarks.

His parallel activity as a film soundtrack composer offers another outlet for his ideas of how sound can affect and interact with its environment: here, his compositions redefine the images they accompany. "[Consider the example] of a blue car and a red sky. The sound can make that car appear to move faster and it can make the sky more red. It can also make the car seem menacing or give the feeling that the sky holds storm clouds," he suggests. "I think about the relationship of sound to image in terms of background and foreground. In a traditional film, most of the music stays in the background, whereas in the pieces that I have been involved in, there is room for the music to become very prominent, occasionally overshadow the image, and then fall back to let the picture take over again. Not unlike a duet of two musicians."

Vitiello's approach owes much to the visual artists he has worked with over the years. Originally a guitarist with assorted New York groups, he hooked up with video auteur Nam June Paik in 1991. It was to be the start of a long and fruitful collaboration which has lasted to this day. Vitiello would receive calls from Paik asking him to come and videotape the latter's Buddha sculptures, or to document a month-long Fluxus event, or assist in a tribute performance to John Cage. "In the beginning I would try to explain that I was a musician and was not sure I could do all that he asked," recalls Vitiello. "He would reply that all of this would make me a better musician. Of course he was right. The exposure to all of this work, his concepts of connecting a history of the avant garde to a contemporary setting, a sense of spontaneity in performance that takes into account all that you have done and seen before, taught me more than I can say."

During this period, Vitiello was also acquiring an insight into other art forms, as a result of composing soundtracks for experimental film, video and dance. "In most cases, this [has meant] working side by side with the artists, and being influenced by their process of creating a work, just as they are influenced by my methods. I have looked for musical ways to parallel visual structures and effects, straight and crooked lines, ideas of narrative versus non-narrative," he explains. For Vitiello music and video have certain creative techniques in common. "People who edit video work in very similar ways to [electronic] musicians. They have certain prepared materials — raw footage — and they experiment with playback speeds and layering. Actually [some] of the most well-known artists who have worked with video were first involved in music — Paik was at Darmstadt with Stockhausen and Cage, while Bill Viola worked with David Tudor."

Vitiello's current collaborations are proving equally fruitful. He is working on a number of projects with Pauline Oliveros, Scanner and cellist Frances-Marie Uitti, following their group performances at last year's per->SON festival in Cologne (see *The Wire* 169). An EP for Scanner's new label, Sulphur, is in the pipeline, as well as an album of duets featuring Uitti on cello and himself on prepared guitar. These albums will follow on the heels of his recent solo release, *The Light Of Falling Cars*, which likewise included contributions from Oliveros. One of the most memorable releases of the year so far, it immerses listeners in a kaleidoscopic array of mesmerising sound and textures that appear to move all around them. The CD also marks a new direction from his previous work, which is documented on two self-released CDs: his soundtrack for the Brazilian film *Enredando As Pessoas* (*Intriguing People*), and *Chairs Not Stairs*, which collects his installation music. "The music I was making prior to [*The Light Of Falling Cars*] represents a more melodic, romantic side than that which I am focusing on now, which is more about the physicality of vibration and the manipulation of organic sounds by extreme processing, and the physicality of sound and vibration which you can experience as moving in front of and behind you." Vitiello will apply this new approach for an ambitious commission planned for later this year. "This summer I will have free studio space in the World Trade Centre. My thought is to record as much as I can of the building's vibration and re-amplify it into the space."

Vitiello's close encounters with the visual arts have also made him eminently qualified to curate exhibitions: a former video curator at the Knitting Factory, he has also created several programmes for festivals and museums dedicated to Charlotte Moorman, the avant garde cellist who was Paik's longtime performing partner. For his next curatorship, he will be devising a sound programme to open in September for the ongoing *American Century* exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. It will include contributions from Steve Reich, Alvin Lucier, Pauline Oliveros and Ikue Mori, as well as a selection of Fluxus material. "I want to examine how we define sound as an art form and see how the Whitney's audience can come to grips with a room in which they sit and listen to Alvin Lucier, just as they might sit and look at a painting. I have also asked several artists and historians to offer a list of milestones in the development of sound as an art form in the last 50 years," he explains. "I am excited that [for once] the museum will give such consideration to sound, as it so often falls into the backdrop of critical attention once pictures enter the scene." □ The Light Of Falling Cars *is out now on JdK. Contact Stephen Vitiello at* Vitiello64@aol.com

GO TO:

Audio Mulch
www.webpage.com.au/audiomulch

Audio Mulch is one of a raft of new music software packages that are accelerating computer music towards the unpredictability and expressiveness of conventional instruments. Reputedly Stock, Hausen & Walkman's favourite app the Mulch puts up a graphic interface that allows the user to morph and mutate sounds by grabbing lines and images on a screen, and combine them with built-in effects or 'contraptions', including drum machine, comb filters, monophonic synthesizer, granulator and spatialiser. The latest version of the application includes new functions like Invert, which reverses the polarity of a sound's input signal, and DigiGrunge, for that low-bit noise assault. The Windows only program can be downloaded as shareware, and a full version can be registered for a small fee.

Indeterminacy
www.lcdf.org/indeterminacy/

For anyone intrigued by the Undercurrents article The Music of Chance (*The Wire* 183), Eddie Kohler has put together a neat site dedicated to John Cage's greatest application of hazard to music/poetry, *Indeterminacy*. The site archives 186 of Cage's shortform paragraphs, which take the form of small anecdotes, poems, jokes and epigrams. You can select a random 'indeterminacy of the day' from the whole bunch — as Kohler says, the piece seems ideally suited to this kind of treatment on the Web. He has also transcribed a handful of relevant Cage writings, including the sleevenotes to an original Folkways LP of Cage's readings, and an extract from his book *Silence*.

ROB YOUNG

WIRE AD No.017
PHOTOGRAPH BY RAWPAWGRAPHICS

on location

Going live: summer festivals special

Music from old rope: John Lacey. Inset: Oval (right), Dean Roberts (far right)

PHOTOS JOHNNY VOLCANO

Labradford's Second Festival Of Drifting

UK London Union Chapel

Masters of slow sonic drift they may be, but second time around, Labradford haven't quite found the format for the Festival of Drifting Potentially an invitation to sensory journeying through the ocean of sound, the four three-act evenings were more a series of discrete islands with the current gradually carrying the event into the doldrums

Notonous for sampling minute slices of noise from real objects and blowing them up into anarchic canvases, Matmos's MC Schmidt and Drew Daniel open the festival by turning the cavernous octagonal space of North London s Union Chapel into a vast echo chamber for sonic derangements Breaking the silence with a burst of Dada vocalisation their Phil Minton-like bird cries are sampled and fed into a compressed field of repeating calls, which is mixed into tinkling and whirring noise loops After ten minutes they shift the mood, introducing a Hawaiian-style slide banjo over a vibrating sonic mesh, which is modified into a pulsating feedback groove when they whack the volume into overdrive Always resourceful in their search for unlikely sound objects, Matmos spark their third improvisation by taking electronic readings off a static-ridden forearm, which they amplify into something like an electric-shaver ensemble underpinned with a lumbering bass drum sound

Next, Pole's Stefan Betke rolls out his signature bass-heavy electrodub for a set that sounds less minimal and more King Tubby influenced than those he performed in London last year Halfway through he begins tinkling away at the Union Chapel's grand piano, an unlikely combination suggestive of Harry Connick Jnr jamming with Aba Shanti Either way, Betke provides the most accessible and driven — if not exactly drifting — music of the first two nights, and gets the biggest response

Curators Labradford close the first night with a lengthy demonstration of their drifting techniques slow, resonant guitar notes flowing around an overdriven bass and a muffled low end beat Their melodic drone rock recalls Can's guitar jams at their spaciest crossed with the kind of heavily pedalled, Gothic piano chords pounded out by Nick Cave Brushing slow guitar strokes onto a backdrop of louring, sustained organ chords, their music is sometimes as expansive as Ennio Morricone s *Once Upon A Time In The West* soundtrack The trouble is, when you re sitting in a wooden church pew, you can only go with Labradford's dreamlike drift for so long

The festival s guitar-based second night gets off to a bad start with the announcement that Caspar Brotzmann has been cancelled due to the late arrival of his flight Dean Roberts gamely agrees to plug the gap with Phill Niblock and (former Band Of) Susan Stenger joining him midway through an extended opening set Roberts a product of New Zealand's low profile lo-fi scene produces atmospheric textures from the supine booy of his guitar by detuning strings rattling them with mechanical devices, and tapping the neck to produce sonic booms or gong-like reverberations Though his technique invites comparison with Keith Rowe his playing seems oblique, accidental and meditative rather than masterful besides it's really not loud enough for the space leaving his performance sounding sketchy and unfulfilled

Things don t really improve when Niblock and Stenger plug in and the three of them spin out a lengthy drone With two e-bows on bass and guitar and a Powerbook, the trio occupies different octaves of a single note inducing helicopter and buzzsaw vibrations and dense brassy drones, while causing shimmering fluctuations in the higher ranges As drones go it is too busy to appeal to purists, and for the less committed it is oppressive and overwhelming

Vini Reilly s airy echobox-based instrumentals are the perfect foil to Labradford's take on the drifting guitar instrumental After 20 years his breezy but wayward riffing on jazz folk and classical elements still comes in at a refreshing tangent to most of the Ambient musics that have happened in between his early Factory releases and the present But tonight various competing musical currents seem to be running through his mind Introducing himself as "Herbie s Psychopomp", Reilly switches constantly between different modes — one moment he's the alienated Factory Records individualist, picking solo guitar while squatting on the stage like it's his bedroom floor, the next, he's playing with rougher but gangly panache, backed by his longtime Durutti Column partner drummer Bruce Mitchell, and

More drifters (clockwise from top): Robin Guthrie, Cosey Fanny Tutti, Vini Reilly

a more recently incorporated sampler The more gregarious he gets the less focused the set becomes and before long he s playing rock and blues albeit with a viola player in tow, by which point the music is suggestive of a quite different festival — Reading circa 1971

The opening set of the third night featuring the Danish trio Silo was only marginally better attended than your average evensong service Perhaps the poor turnout was a consequence of the fact that both this festival and the LMC s event on the South Bank (see below) took place over the same weekend (Don't promoters ever talk to each other?)

Some of Silo now live in Britain, and their clogged-pore rock instrumentals approach the heaviness of Robert Hampson's 80s group Loop True to the festival's title, the music travels with no obvious destination in mind Idling has become fashionable in recent times of course but Silo don't leave you with much to chew on apart from some deep bass scuds and throbs and some unfunky drumming

Mark Nelson's solo Pan American project eradicates Labradford's atmospheric oil slicks refining their slo-mo eddies down to a crystalline electric piano flecking BJ Cole is always on hand whenever a pedal steel guitar is called for, and tonight the pair set about conjuring an image of rolling tumbleweed When Nelson reduces his keyboard input to a sparseness reminiscent of AMM's John Tilbury, the pair seem about to slip their earthly tethers and float into the vaulting to join the eight stained glass musician-angels set in the Union Chapel's rose window Like *Apollo*-era Eno, these two know that space music is still best expressed through the sound of the desert

Robin Guthrie, whose Geoff Capes-like frame offers a curious contrast to the wasted form of Vini Reilly the night before has been biding time in the wilderness himself — a vacant lot which he roams as a terminally addicted FX junkie A long way from The Cocteau Twins filigree and shadowplay, Guthrie s impromptu piece is so larded with tube screamers, chorus pedal and other just-in guitarshop gimmicks, that the raw theme is crushed under the dead weight of expensive interference

50 per cent of an audience at an Alfred Brendel recital can't see the pianist's hands at work, but they've presumably turned out for the presence and the music, not the spectacle This doesn t merit comment in classical music circles but somehow the generation of music in real time on a computer still seems to raise an audience s hackles True, Markus Popp, Oval's sole surviving member remains so immobile that you want to throw a coin into his hat to make him change pose, but all the motion, tension and repositioning takes place in his absorbing music's shuttling switchback layers It's your perception, and not Popp that jumps around The flinty scraping from *Systemisch* provides an itching pulse, and the midrange of the sound is occupied by a noise like a nail rolling down the inside of a glass tube When a Mike Sammes Singers chorus suddenly rears out of the ferment, it's a moment of real shock, and the way Popp subsequently beats out the soundfile into a thin metallic wafer before folding it back into the process offers the only audible insight into what's actually taking place on the unseen screen With Oval's distressed CDs long behind him, Popp approaches a conversation between man and machine in which neither speaks with their own voice

Chris (Carter) & Cosey (Fanny Tutti) must regret the moment they agreed to their resident graphic/video artist John Lacey being dragged onstage bound in a coil of thick anchor-rope by a handful of slightly bemused looking leatherjacketed post-industrial heavies As a prelude to C&C's own performance, Lacey taxed both patience and the ability to prevent an outburst of hysterics he intoned screamed and muttered simplistic lines about being cabin'd cribb'd and confin'd by the body (politic) constraints from which Industrialists always derived their confrontational strength Unfortunately, as the stumbling Lacey is bundled gracelessly into the wings by his retainers his finishing school angst — mercifully brief — has pitched the venue back in time to a quainter era where reciting the Lord's Prayer in eye shadow could be thought an act of supreme transgression

While C&C have done more than most to keep the spirit of their own particular time and achievements alive their music has not weathered so well Public appearances in London are scarce now, so tonight the Chapel's pews heave impressively with black leather and metal body modification This is a pagan gathering no question but a strangely unmoving ceremony C&C's no-frills performance — Cosey prodding a laptop or placing a guitar athwart her lap, Carter back-rooming it with a tabletop studio — is augmented by luv'd up Acid fractals and a slide package of predictable arcana glyphs and alembics, you know the drill In the isolation of their East Anglian retreat, the C&C music factory seem not to have noticed the 90s erosion of Acid House, meaning the backbones of their tracks conform to sequences others have long since broken down, while Cosey's songwords evaporate in thick cumuli of reverb and echo With Oval's pulverised data still floating in the air, C&C's journey through the physical body is going nowhere fast

MATT FFYTCHE/ROB YOUNG

LMC's Eighth Annual Festival Of Experimental Music

UK London Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room & St John's Church

The committed and communicative music of the Lindsay Cooper Song Project was sufficient justification for the staging of the London Musicians Collective s Eighth Annual Festival Of Experimental Music Featured vocalists Phil Minton and Maggie Nicols were hugely affirmative imaginative and impassioned, offering welcome respite from pre-millennial cynicism and stupidity Their performance in the Purcell Room, on the festival's second night, was lifted beyond its customary excellence by the energising presence of the alert and responsive percussionist Robin Schulkowsky Cellist Paul Jayashina pianist Veryan Weston, clarinettist Ruth Cawsey, and Dean Broderick on keyboard, accordion and bassoon were also outstanding, especially on 'The Road Is Wider Than Long" Cooper s profoundly moving setting of a Roland Penrose poem written in the Balkans 60 years ago

The compassion and critique which characterise Cooper s music seemed all the more relevant for being framed between two electroacoustic events which marginalised human presence Staging his first British concert since his 1956 Aldeburgh appearance, Pierre Henry concluded the opening night at the Queen Elizabeth Hall Brightly lit at a console in the centre of a darkened auditorium, he was accorded the enthusiastic welcome appropriate to such an important figure in the development of musique concrete But the ensuing live mixdown of pieces, processing Schubert, Beethoven and rock cliche, was a triumph of misplaced intelligence The technology impressed but the creative input was decidedly faltering

The electroacoustic collage which followed the Lindsay Cooper Song Project on the second night also required the audience to stare into an empty stage but after 20 minutes John Wynne's sonic portrait of a remote Kenyan village acquired dramatic significance with the arrival of William Ingosi Mwoshi He delivered a spinted selection of

William Ingosi Mwoshi

PHOTO SIMON LEIGH

Clive Bell and Jah Wobble at the LMC Festival. Below: Pierre Henry (left), South Bank Gamelan Players (right)

PHOTOS SIMON LEIGH

narrative songs from the region accompanied by the drone of his single-stringed fiddle. Ethnological self-reflexiveness was granted ample food for thought by such a performance in this venue. Less earnest reflection arrived at the conclusion that the festival's organisers were engaging in some crafty tactical juxtaposition. The impression was confirmed by the affable ensuing performance from Jah Wobble's Deep Space with flautist Clive Bell, reed-player Jean Pierre Rasle and drummer Mark Sanders improvising over and around Wobble's anchor-weight basslines.

Whatever programming the likes of Cooper and Wobble amid electroacoustic non-performances proved there was still a place for human intervention in experimental music. Indeed, Henry's concert was preceded by altogether more satisfying sounds. Lol Coxhill opened the festival with a polished solo, starting from an aerial pinpoint of shrill split tones which spiralled to earth along characteristic slurring runs. Then came a poised set by The South Bank Gamelan Players realising three works by Philip Corner, the Fluxus [illegible] member of the crucial Tone [illegible]. The opening piece *gamelan* was a particular, fine exploration of resonant metal, from gong throbs to the iridescent shimmer of hovering clouds of overtones.

On the third night the venue switched to the nearby St John's Church. The opening performance comprised a remarkable improvisation by Filament, the duo of Otomo Yoshihide and Sachiko M. Starting from inaudibility, they stealthily sculpted the building's acoustic space so that tones which seemed quiet and benign simultaneously ravaged the eardrums. The way they generated standing waves enabled anyone still listening to tune in and out by simply moving their heads backwards or forwards.

John Tilbury's selection of piano pieces by Morton Feldman was predictably convincing. Tilbury's extraordinary control of dynamics makes him a perfect interpreter for Feldman's music, from the explosive attack which introduced *Intermission 5* to the sustained delicate finesse of *Palais De Mari*.

[illegible] in accordance with the [illegible] of provocative contrast, the [illegible] saxophonists known as Mass [illegible]ducers staged a musicircus piece reminiscent of Gilbert Artman's Urban Sax. It was theatre and fun primarily, but 2D saxophones in a church can conjure some mightily curious chords.

The final night returned to the Purcell Room, but the fun was sustained courtesy of Eugene Chadbourne and Mondo Chadbourne. 2000 Gram Parsons's 'Hickory Wind' has never sounded less poignant than in Chadbourne's seriously warped rendition, but the guitarist shifted perversely closer to centrefield when he took up his banjo and launched into Captain Beefheart's solid sender 'The Dust Blows Forward 'N The Dust Blows Back'. Drummer Billy Kettle played it straight yet knowing. Chris Cornetto proved the ideal partner for Chadbourne's Country-inflected adventures, inserting synthesizer squeals as lap-steel surrogates.

Existential angst necessarily followed, and Joe Banks, the artist also known as Disinformation, was the man to supply it. Compared to Filament's surgical precision, this electronic onslaught seemed bludgeoning and oppressive, but if you require demonstration of the power of sound there is little to beat deep waves pulsing up through the floor and coursing through your body. Experimental in a laboratory sense, and music only incidentally.

Rounding things off were The Tobias Delius Quartet with Han Bennink in exuberant form, playing drums, adjacent wall and floor. Bennink looked ecstatic when the group swung, as it often did, through a set of compositions tightly scored yet sufficiently flexible to accommodate Tristan Honsinger's idiosyncratic and bracing cello work. Bassist Joe Williamson, looking like a young Charlie Haden, showed he could thrive in such company, while Delius's forthright tenor sax exerted centripetal pull.

It was an engaging conclusion to a lively and provoking, if only intermittently experimental festival. In fact, the usefulness of the term 'experimental' as applied to music was an issue which suggested itself regularly in the course of the weekend. This was not merely a pedantic response to the fact that little of the music seemed to warrant the adjective. Such a term inevitably shapes the constitution of an audience and its expectations. Admittedly, concerts were generally very well attended, the LMC has a solid longterm following. But the suspicion remains that 'experimental' has become something of a barrier, deterring potential listeners to fine non-experimental music, such as that of Tobias Delius, William Ingosi Mwoshi and Lindsay Cooper.

JULIAN COWLEY

Bang On A Can Festival

USA, New York, Henry Street Settlement

Distinctions between high and low art — between compositions laboured over in conservatoires, say, and tracks whipped up on a Mac to move asses — are largely self-imposed. The eggheads in their staid academic settings and the beatmasters hanging in smoky clubs might never meet, but avid listeners rarely allow such musical apartheid inside their homes.

New York's percussion-heavy Bang On A Can Festival, now in its 11th year after a 1998 sabbatical, is clearly in the eggheads' camp, despite its self-image as a populist event. Yet its five days of can banging is clearly too dissonant for New York's upmarket, uptight Lincoln Centre crowd. Though the organisers added a few token 'popular' acts such as Talvin Singh and Fred Frith to boost ticket sales, they didn't work hard enough to cross-pollinate with a broader audience.

But the opening eight hour marathon of 23 unique compositions drew participants from the academy and the street. There were some insipid in-jokes. Elena Kats-Chernin shared her very late discovery that minor keys are associated with sad music by bluntly singing the

fact out loud while banging out some minor music in a minor key Meanwhile, during Judy Dunaway's 'sexy blonde in a little black dress' act, she squeezed a balloon between her legs and massaged it with her hands during her amusing "Music For Tenor Balloon", Kato Hideki's explosive electric bass detonated throughout "Turbulent Zone", and The Patrick Grant Group produced gamelan sounds on electric keyboards to mesmerising effect on Grant's compelling "Everything Distinct"

The tam tam rented for Red Fish Blue Fish's performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Mikrophonie I* was an original designed exclusively for the piece the organisers proudly noted It had been collecting dust in a shop basement for years until tonight, when this San Diego quintet brushed, pummelled, scraped and scratched at it Later they aired their theatrical flair again on Erik Griswold s "Strings Attached" Taking the title literally, they enhanced its rhythmic patterns by attaching strings to their drum sticks

Much of the rest of the opening marathon was spent showing off exotic instruments and wacky concepts with little serious musical intention But then two performances brought the day back into focus with some glorious music First, tenor saxophonist Charles Gayle stopped clowning around he's often been performing in greasepaint recently — when he joined drummer Rashid Bakr for "Christ's Creation" His mindblowing improvisation mustered more soul than the eggheads could manage balloon rubbing and all Bang On A Can All-Stars' version of Tan Dun's lovely *Concerto For Six*, a complex work with both Eastern and Brazilian echoes, was the other tour de force And David Krakauer sent the sell-out crowd home smiling with a medley of bouncy klezmer hits

Though given over to women, the second night followed a similar pattern Miya Masoka played another parlour trick, running through "Pacing", first on traditional koto and then in its electronic version complete with lights and lasers Zeena Parkins did her Jimi Hendrix impression, riding her electric harp's whammy bar, and Martha Mooke duetted with a loop of herself on electric viola As a finale Jin Hi Kim brought all the women back onstage, leading them with her Indian komungo through a mostly successful group improvisation

Headed by the more 'commercial' Talvin Singh and Fred Frith the next two nights felt more like benefit concerts for the festival than integral elements of it However, the palpable tension developing between Singh's dope smoking fans and the more high-minded BOAC organisers added some drama to his tabla pounding and electronics while the full house swooned at his every raised eyebrow Ditto the following night, when the frothy Fred Frith Guitar Quartet showed off its shimmering six-string tricks to a herd of corralled captives

The Xenakis retrospective which closed the festival more than earned its top billing Arranged in a V formation behind a mass of drums, gongs and vibes, Red Fish Blue Fish built on Xenakis's sonic architecture, topping and tailing *Metaux* (1978), a piece dating from the Greek composer's mid-period with a propulsive foundation and shimmering white noise ceiling In contrast, they brought out the subtler shadings of the more recent *Okho* (1989)

The auditorium's limitations prevented Red Fish Blue Fish from performing an early Xenakis piece, *Persephassa*, in the round, as required by the score, but they did the next best thing by inviting the audience onstage Sitting cross-legged among the clangorous percussion was one surefire way of grasping the full meaning of Xenakis's sonic architecture metaphor On-stage listeners laughed as they were accosted by shimmering tin-rattling that mirrored the clown-like whistles and cymbal-crashing chandeliers It was a unique experience, underlining the power of one of the century s most challenging composers

TOM ROE

Empty Bottle Festival

USA Chicago Empty Bottle

From the outside you d be hard pressed to distinguish the Empty Bottle from any of the other dozen or so bars scattered along Chicago's busy Western Avenue But this is more than your ordinary Chicago blue collar bar for a three day period once a year it plays host to up to two dozen formidable international improvisors Now in its third year, the capacity crowds it draws nightly suggest that organisers John Corbett and Ken Vandermark are privy to a secret recipe few apprehend

The festival kicked off with Chicago's own Jeb Bishop Trio Bishop's conception on the trombone draws equally from joyful abstraction and dynamic lyricism However the success of his trio's set had as much to do with the symmetry that flowed between bassist Kent Kessler's sawing arco and the liquid accents and interjections emanating from Tim Mulvenna's drum kit As an added bonus for the festival Bishop's crew was augmented with Italian trombonists Giancarlo Schiaffini and Sebi Tramontana This extended line-up balanced the bombastic with the serene, as the three trombonists negotiated Bishop s score

The surprise set performed by guitarist Thurston Moore, Japanese trumpeter Toshinoro Kondo and Dutch performance poet Jaap Blonk was pitched at such a high volume that it did little to endear Moore to the already sceptical diehard Improv fans scrutinising his every note In all fairness, the guitarist was not the culprit — the problem was Kondo's electronic rigging, with his blasts of white noise piercing everyone s eardrums This was an intriguing if painful set that felt like it went on a bit too long

Rounding out the first night was Peter Brotzmann's lethal Die Like A Dog Quartet Recordings only tell the half of it when it comes to Brötzmann, and describing the 'attack' of his sound greatly understates its power His first monolithic note instantly filled the room, grabbing you by the scruff of the neck and challenging you to go the distance with him This first blast acted as a flare gun that locked William Parker and Hamid Drake in a tumultuous gallop Parker's rotund bass bombs and Drake's polyrhythmic rushes and crashes set the table for the saxophonist's jagged lines and Kondo's smeared notes, as they soared into the stratosphere Kondo's utilisation of electronics allows him to chase Brotzmann into the upper register merging Don Cherry with My Bloody Valentine The achievement of this quartet is how they carry the impact of a sledgehammer without sacrificing their mobility

Accepting a Saturday morning slot at the Chicago Cultural Centre paid off for Joelle Léandre and Sebi Tramontana's bass duo, as it relieved them of having to compete with the sometimes apathetic din of the bar crowd Leandre s seemingly effortless manipulation and extension of the instrument s soundworld was awe inspiring In tandem with Tramontana's sensitive muted work the two created a series of delicate and focused improvisations, ranging from chamber-like airiness to frenzied and scratchy dialogue The duo were effectively staging a seminar in vividly sculpted instant compositions

Percussionist Michael Zerang's Jumper Cables enlisted the services of Kevin Drumm's prepared guitar, Don Meckley's short wave radio and Jim Baker s insane voltage controlled ARP synthesizer The scored piece favoured oblong shapes that mixed the sensibilities of Messiaen with Sun Ra Baker s washes and swoops dovetailed with Zerang s ruffle of scraped cymbals and shadings, while Meckley and Drumm blurred the edges of the piece with layers of buzzing sustain

The second evening's surprise set was The AALY Trio featuring Mats Gustafsson and Ken Vandermark Chock full of jolting, chug-a-lugging lines, they packed a visceral wallop, extending their pieces into full throttle improvisations egged on by the edgy insistence of Kjell Nordeson s percussion Both reed players favoured idiosyncratic, overblown approaches that jettisoned blocks of sound into a stumbling, punchdrunk harmony

The second night closed with an encounter between Thurston Moore and Mats Gustafsson Moore's stance here was more demonstrative than on his recent recorded meeting with Evan Parker (*The Promise*) Armed with a battalion of pedals and percussive devices, Moore vaulted into the fray shoving a drumstick in between the guitar neck and the strings instigating all sorts of screeching mayhem Not to be

PHOTOS CALBEE BOOTH

Toshinori Kondo and (left) Kent Kessler shake up Chicago's Empty Bottle

Thurston Moore: don't fret it

outdone Gustafsson reacted with his patented bubbling and skronking on an arsenal of reed instruments The charged encounter left the crossover crowd scraping their jaws off the floor in bewilderment

The trio of Zerang, Blonk and Gustafsson opened the final night with a set characterised by its textural diversity Blonk s presence brought out the more theatrical side of his improvising partners, prompting Gustafsson to partake in his own convoluted vocalising through his patented fluteophone and baritone saxophone Blonk carried himself like an awkward mime artist while spewing forth a frightening composite of garbled texts, whinnies and squeals Blonk is undoubtedly a talented improvisor, but like Han Bennink you can get too much of him over two successive nights Zerang was the trio s secret weapon, hovering stealthily in the background switching between percussive devices to get just the right sound to complement Gustafsson s slap-tonguing or Blonk s glottal straining

The duo of Schiaffini and Tramontana expanded their trombones with a table full of electronics Tramontana displayed a perverse sense of irony, and proved a perfectly twisted catalyst, as samples of Jack Teagarden and various national anthems punctuated all the blustering and growling Their set was the calm before the impending storm of Peter Brotzmann's 11-strong group

Expecting nothing less than a clobbering onslaught from a group that featured Gustafsson, Vandermark, Bishop, Kondo, Parker, Kessler, Drake Zerang as well as cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm and saxophonist Mars Williams the audience was wrongfooted when the leader threw a curveball A piece written for the group divided the ensemble into smaller units who tangled for a bit before being reabsorbed into the tussle of Brotzmann's lead horn section Contrary to his detractors' claims, Brotzmann showed he was capable of vibrant clarity, effectively balancing the full-on ensemble and the various shades provided by its individual elements By the end, nobody could begrudge him cranking the power to the max to close the three-day festival with one glorious crash of 11 instruments

JON C MORGAN

PHOTOS THURSTON MOORE CALBEE BOOTH MERZBOW SONJA ARAMBASIC

Totally Huge New Music Festival

Australia Perth various venues

Representing one of the most ambitious contemporary music events in Australia, the second Totally Huge New Music Festival attracted encouraging crowds over eight days and nights at a variety of Perth venues Radically expanded since last year 84 artists lined up for 76 events included free street performances and lectures a concert series of local and visiting musicians and an outdoor sonic installation

Despite its position on the geographic fringe Perth is home to two well-established New Music groups, Magnetic Pig and Nova Ensemble As a prelude to its own festival appearance Magnetic Pig sliced themselves up for four Single Rashers concerts in which individual members gave solo performances Reed player Lindsay Vickery opened the festival by subjecting his instruments to fierce digital intervention in the dark underground room of the Greenwich Club Sometimes placing the musician in direct competition with technology Vickery's works are always intriguing One piece requires him to perform on electronic clarinet a score generated in real time by a computer program Further highlights in the Single Rashers series were provided by cellist Iain Grandage and percussionist Paul Tanner at the Brass Monkey a popular city hotel and watering hole This experiment to take New Music out of the concert hall paid dividends whereas external noise might be distracting in a formal setting, here the hum of traffic added to the cosmopolitan ambience Less successful was Cathie Travers s closing night performance at the Greenwich, where a noisy club crowd assumed she was there as a background act This was regrettable because her versatile work ranging from thundering beat-driven electronic constructions through cabaret songs to folksy accordion numbers deserves to be heard

The noise night at the International Players Lounge secured what was perhaps the festival's biggest coup an appearance by Merzbow, whose members Masami and Reiko Akita, delivered an hour-long aural onslaught the likes of which Perth has probably never heard before The waves of brutal yet seductive noise reverberating round the cavernous room pinned a capacity audience to the floor Towards the end, many punters swayed serenely as if overcome by the awesome stimuli 'retailed," according to Perth art critic David Bromfield "with all the nerveless passion of the late shift at Muja power station"

In total contrast, poet Scott-Patrick Mitchell and bassoonist Sarah Collins s *SpokenNewWordMusic* was a mixed media piece staged at the Rechabites Hall Covering themes as diverse as gay culture, urban landscapes and the subconscious Mitchell's observant, vivid poems had an Allen Ginsberg-like spontaneity and sophistication that belied his 21 years Collins's live bassoon accompaniment meshed with and enhanced Mitchell's sardonic or declamatory moods

Merzbow: a Totally Huge noise

The festival s attempts to be inclusive often resulted in wildly varying standards unfairly putting unsuitable artists on the spot. Following Mitchell and Collins the bland Jungle-influenced group Meg Canto might have been forgettable, but they deserved credit for ploughing on as the crowd exited in droves

The Western Australian composer Jonathan Mustard s dance and music collaboration utilised interactive technology but it wasn't always clear why On *Boat Song* he played melancholy wooden flute as two dancers surveyed the horizon They then moved gymnastically around a stylised boat while producing sampled sound sequences, in keeping with a sea theme, via sensor pads on the floor It was a pleasant diversion, but in itself the electronic novelty, used with different sounds in two more dances was not enough to sustain interest. Too often there was no discernible connection between effects and movements

Friday at the Playhouse brought together pianist Roger Smalley a New Music exponent since 1976 and percussionist Iain Robbie representing a new generation of avant garde musicians, for a tense edge-of-the-seat encounter Toshimitsu Tanaka's solo *2 Movements For Marimba* was notable for its skilfully executed crescendoes on repeated tones David Lumsdaine's *Kangaroo Hunt* juxtaposed swift minimalist passages with sparse, slow sections Chimes and gongs were extensively used giving the work dirge-like nuances appropriate to its underlying theme of conservation

The Nova Ensemble employ an eccentric collection of musical devices constructed from junk, scrap metal and industrial plastics Much to its frustration the group has become better known for its bizarre instruments than for its music To rectify this director David Pye created *The Lament Of Gilgamesh* Based on the ancient Mesopotamian myth-poem it incorporated a text in order to shift audience attention away from the mechanics of performance Seated under a pyramid shaped frame Phil Thomson narrated the tale of King Gilgamesh, who following the death of his best friend Enkidu listed all the people and animals mourning the tragic loss Playing panpipes and customised drum modules Nova accompanied Thomson with highly charged rhythms and wistful fragmented melodies The collaborative score alluded to Indonesian gamelan and Celtic folk traditions, with percussive vocal effects and irregular time signatures keeping players and listeners on their toes

Renowned for his work with ruined pianos, Western Australia's Ross Bolleter ended the evening with three accordion solos, including his most recent piece *Labyrinth 3* which exploited his formidable improvising abilities

At the same venue the following night, the swirling, distorted sub frequencies, bass noise and random effects of Lux Mammoth (Cat Hope and Al Smith) sounded like they would have been better suited to the noise night — but perhaps they weren't interested in preaching to the converted Easier on the ears Rachael Dease's eerie electronically treated chamber work recalled Michael Nyman *Spiral* centred around the extraordinary voice of countertenor Jonathan Brain in the role of a dark angel commenting on the destruction of the earth Magnetic Pig drew us in with a

compelling blend of new works and older pieces like Cathie Travers's 1992 dance theatre piece *Black Lava* and Lindsay Vickery's multilayered pastiche *Savoy Trifle*. Iain Grandage's *Water From The Moon* (composed for a new stage adaptation of the Peter Weir film, *The Year Of Living Dangerously*) deployed an impressive array of timbres and textures mixing saxophone, cello and synthesizer with gamelan sounds to evoke the film's Indonesian settings and tense atmosphere.

The festival's eclectic approach revealed that support for Perth's contemporary music scene is not only far stronger than originally predicted but continues to grow.

NAOMI MILLETT

Otomo Yoshihide

Impakt Festival

The Netherlands. Utrecht various venues

For a number of years, Utrecht's Impakt Festival has quietly but doggedly placed new media in context with various *idees du jour*. Appropriately for this year of retrospective burnout, the loose theme underpinning the fortnight of gigs, clubs, talk, film, performance, art and digital media displays was how these affect the experience of memory. The topic seems especially timely in an age when the persistence of memory is so heavily reliant on electronic data storage, making collective amnesia possible with one touch of a delete key. In the hands of Philip Jeck, who is currently at the height of his creative powers, the memories locked within the vinyl grooves he collects by the yard are laminated and interwoven until your emotions are tickled to breaking point. Opening the batting at the night of Turntablism (co-curated by *The Wire*) at Utrecht's Ekko club, Jeck lays his pocked, serrated and stickered discs on his twin 5Ds Dansettes with the quiet diligence of a potter, but the oceanic imbroglio of loops, stuck needles and rescued riffs repeats on itself like the spray of waves on a coastline. The same sound is repeated timelessly, but the individual droplets are rearranged infinitely with each subsequent crash.

As Jeck remarked during a public 'couch debate' earlier in the day, the delicacy of vinyl means that records live a parallel life with their owner, accruing wrinkles, pocks and scars all their own. Thomas Brinkmann, the Cologne artist whose face also contains the tracks of years of intense concentration, shares Jeck's obsessions with the ghost presences that limn a record's microgroove, but he channels his interest through the purifying strainer of Euclidean geometry. In a club environment such as this, Brinkmann jacks up the intensity of his austere beats until the crowd is forced to move. Working a deck customised with a second pickup arm, Brinkmann creams off the top beats and tucks in a secondary stratus that destabilises the pulse. A performance of exacting ruthlessness is crowned by a session of threshing Profan-style Techno that turns the audience into a choppy sea of jerking heads.

Otomo Yoshihide opens his set as per expectations, with several thunderbolt reports which he raps out by slapping the top of a needle. But the shockjock attention-grabbing tactics are shortly replaced by a vast, metallic drone, which he cultivates from spinning two LPs (lifted, I note, from the Italian electroacoustic label Alga Marghen), combined with sounds sourced from a DJ's CD player and MiniDisc and a handful of effects units. If Otomo's work to date has concentrated on an ironic dismembering of history that parallels the apparent disregard of the Japanese for physical reminders of the past, his current approach leaves a music of extreme beauty and resonant depth hanging in the air like an unavoidable totem, only for it to evaporate into thin air the moment it's over. Otomo spins out the brassy, buzzing drone for at least half an hour, before wrapping things up with a violent flourish by crushing his cartridge's face into the plastic once more and smacking the whole Technics down onto the tabletop — the Buddha executed at the height of nirvana.

Overrunning the territory Otomo has annexed, Dave Davies of Manchester's Jeep Beat Collective lets loose a fusillade of cut and recut breakbeats. With no one to battle, his hands declare civil war on himself.

The penultimate day's music events open with an early evening rendition of a new live/sampling composition by Londoner John Wall. This premiere performance involves bassist John Edwards and drummer Mark Sanders, who, working in tandem with Wall, generated the source sounds for him to sample and process. Tonight's tryout is a successful attempt to integrate acoustic instruments with electronics, even as the zinging torque of Wall's latest work often threatens to twang the music apart. But the packed energy is released by the obligato passages for the two musicians. Edwards plays a particularly crucial role here, clawing at opposite ends of his bass strings as if he was trying to gut a bear. Sanders comes from the 'rabbit out of a hat' school of Improv drumming: one minute he's doing something to a cymbal placed on top of a tom tom, the next he's mucking about with a chain or pattering his sticks against the snare stand. Since Wall has restricted his rare public appearances to playback-only affairs, he has found a perfect way to add the organic energy of musicians to the laborious detail of his programmed pieces.

A few hours later, the Ekko has reverted to a club site, and Stefan Betke is prancing triumphantly behind his mixing desk. In his Pole guise, Betke has found a new confidence now that his cavernous, beatless blue dubs are in demand across Europe and United States. Anyone still unconvinced that a music consisting solely of electronics, crackling filter effects and theophanous bass rumbles can move you in every sense should check out Betke before he dives down into the studio again.

Where Betke has made himself highly visible over the past 12 months, a personal appearance by anyone from Berlin's Chain Reaction stable is a rare treat — for the English at least. So tonight's triple act, solo DJ sets by Substance and Vainqueur, and a live slot by the duo's merged presence as Scion — is an eagerly anticipated occasion. Substance supplies the rhythmic pound and forward thrust, while Vainqueur's Rene Lowe damps down the Substance beat to a net of clicks and suckings while slathering his sound's steam hydraulics across the ceiling. About three quarters of an hour later, the Substance pulse catches fire, igniting Lowe's brushed metal soundflakes into magnesium flares. Never resting on its laurels, the beauty of this particular subnet of Chain Reaction lies in the way the sound eternally flutters out of your ears' grasp, always reshaping itself just before your memory manages to stick it with a pin.

ROB YOUNG

Tom Zé with Tortoise and Jarbas Mariz

USA. Minneapolis Walker Art Centre

Whatever you think of Tortoise, and no matter how rhythmically adept or sonically savvy they are, their metier is background music. Conversely, however delightful you find Tom Zé's definitively skewed pop, it is undeniable that it recedes into the ether about as easily as bubbles sink. So when it was announced that Tortoise members Dan Fliegel, John Herndon, Doug McCombs, John McEntire and Jeff Parker would join the Brazilian singer/multi-instrumentalist Jarbas Mariz in backing Zé on his six date US tour, the prospect was, to put it mildly, intriguing. The mad scientist of Tropicalia in a soundclash with the world's hippest post-rock act: who would survive?

It wasn't really like that, of course — Tortoise were Zé's *backing* band, after all. And even if they had wanted to subvert their paymaster, they didn't really get the chance. The seven musicians had just a week to rehearse one of the most formally challenging catalogues connected with pop. For the uninitiated, think of a Bahian cross between Captain Beefheart and Tom Waits, but with a goofier sense of humour.

Despite such constraints, the seven men passed the test with flying colours. Even a composition as tricky as "Toc" with its seemingly random cycles of chords, ticks and tocks, was played perfectly. The arrangements held close to the recordings, which, as anyone familiar with Zé's Luaka Bop albums knows, is no bad thing. If the setting didn't exactly give Tortoise the opportunity to go apeshit at Zé's expense, their performance looked and felt a lot looser than the shows I've caught under their own name. Never the most charismatic of live performers, they seemed liberated at having the attention focused elsewhere. As usual, they were concentrated and responsive, the arrangements breathed, and being onstage with a man they were plainly in awe of raised their performance a notch or two.

It's easy to understand why they were thrilled: old master status aside, Zé, at 63, was a physical loose cannon and a joy to watch. Scampering, mugging, using matchbooks for percussion, dancing like Groucho Marx gone to Carnaval, he is an awesomely limber performer. For "Politicar", his pointed rant against corrupt politicians, he donned and then tore apart a suit jacket, ending the song by swinging his mic stand over his head so hard he nearly lost control of it, coming within feet of hitting vibist McEntire. Zé and Mariz concluded another number with some beautifully executed tumbles; several times he utilised his rubbery face and body to act out his vocal personas. On "Curiosidade" from last year's superb *Fabrication Defect*, for instance, he matched his baby noises with infant-like facial expressions.

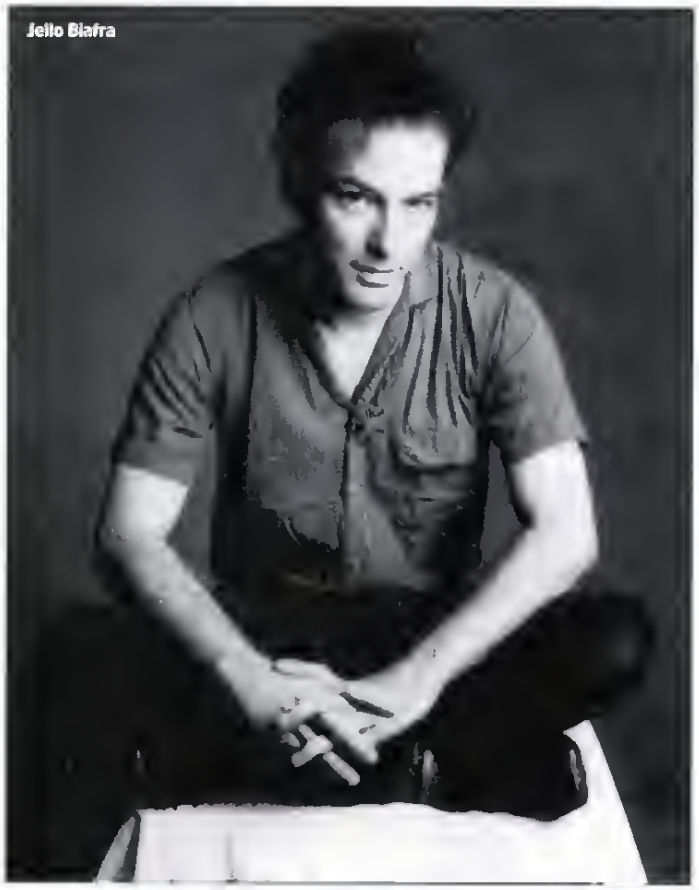
The show wasn't perfect — Zé's often baffling between-song patter could go on painfully long. But all avant-pop shows should be so thoroughly engaging.

MICHAELANGELO MATOS

PHOTO: ROB YOUNG

out there

July's selected live events, club spaces and broadcasts


Jello Biafra

On stage

Marc Almond Camping it up with pop's last Romantic. London Royal Festival Hall. 16 July. £25–£10. 0171 960 4242

Arc Radical improvising string trio of Sylvia Hallet, Danny Kingshill and Gus Garside. London Queens Arms, 22 July. 8pm. £4/£3. 0181 463 0490

Jello Biafra Alternative Tentacles mastermind takes a spoken word performance on the road. Brighton Sallis Benny Theatre (7 July), Leeds University (8), Exeter Phoenix Arts Centre (9), Newport Centre (10)

Carlinhos Brown + Olodum Brazil's Omelete Man eggs on his touring group, plus the great Bahian drum troupe in support. London Royal Festival Hall. 13 July. £25–£10. 0171 960 4242

George Clinton & The P-funk All-Stars The Mothership touches down once again. London Brixton Academy. 17 July. £15. 0171 771 2000

The Creatures + Magnetic The tribal faction of Siouxsie & The Banshees follow up their successful world tour. London Scala, 7 July. 8pm. £11. 0171 833 2022

Celia Cruz The queen of Latin music promotes her new LP *Mi Vida Es Cantar*. Glasgow Jazz Festival (3 July), London Barbican (25)

Ivor Cutler Veteran Scottish surrealist presents his skewed take on the world. London Blackheath Hall. 10 July. 8.30pm. 0181 463 0100

Graham Fitkin The UK composer plays a programme of his fiendishly difficult piano music. London The Space. 10 July. 8pm. £8. 0171 515 7799

Bill Frisell Band + John Scofield A night of air-brushed modern jazz with an extra performance from the Joe Lovano/Dave Holland/Al Foster trio. London Barbican. 11 July. £20–£9.50. 0171 638 8891

Godflesh Frosty Industrial Metal combo play some rare UK dates. London Garage (2 July), Derby Victoria Inn (15), Cheltenham Axiom Arts Centre (16)

Hub Loose electronic supergroup including David Toop, Luke Vibert and Tom 'Squarepusher' Jenkinson teams up for a one-off night of freeform music and sonic exploration. London Spitz. 22 July. 8pm–midnight. £7/£5. 0171 392 9032

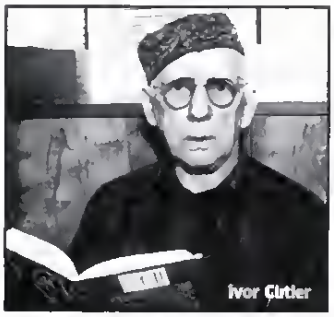
Innerzone Orchestra + UFO Carl Craig's vision of future jazz is unveiled, with some help from a group including former Arkestra drummer Francisco Mora. Japanese lounge trippers United Future Organisation support. London Scala. 16 July, call 0171 833 2022 for details of time and price

Femi Kuti Son of Fela continues his father's Afrobeat legacy with his new LP *Shoki Shoki*. Bradford Festival (16 July), London Royal Festival Hall (17), Liverpool Cream (18), Womad Festival (25)

Lucha Libre Japanese wig-out madness signed to Satellite Records. Brighton Pressure Point (23 June), London Upstairs at the Garage (30), Norwich Fat Paulies (8 July)

Joanna MacGregor As part of *Unknown Public*'s season of creative music evenings pianist MacGregor performs works by Cage, Ballamy, Satoh and others. South London Gallery. 6 July. 7.30pm. £5. 0171 703 6120

The Michael Nyman Band Populist composer presents two new scores along with some old rarities. London Royal Festival Hall. 12 July. 7.30pm. £25–£10. 0171 960 4201


Ivor Cutler

Pandaemonium Band Eight piece who combine jazz instrumentation, electronics and turntables in a tribute to Sun Ra. London Red Rose Club, 11 July. 8pm. £6/£4. 0171 928 4285

Eddie Palmieri Celebrated Latin bandleader shows off his blend of salsa and jazz. Leeds Town and Country Club (1 July), Manchester Band on the Wall (3), Bristol Fiddlers Club (4)

Pram + Telefunken Sub-Krautrock double bill. London Upstairs at the Garage, 16 July. £6. 0171 607 1818

The Residents Love 'em or hate 'em, you can't draw a complete blank as the notorious West Coast multimedia troupe bring their condensed Bible *Wormwood* to the UK. London Forum. 19 July. £15. 0171 344 0044

Marc Ribot Y Los Cubanos Postizos New York guitarist shows off his latest Latin incarnation. London Jazz Cafe, 5 July. £15. £12.50. 0171 916 6060

Oumou Sangare The West African diva drops in on her latest world circuit. London Royal Festival Hall. 11 July. £20–£10. 0171 960 4242

Patti Smith Legendary performer and poetess fronts her own group for two rare UK shows. London Forum. 1–2 July. 7pm. £16.50. 0171 344 0044

The Sonic Catering Band A show to coincide with the release of their first supper 10" series. London Lux Centre, 8 July. 8pm. 0171 684 0201

David Thomas & Two Pale Boys Pere Ubu founder attempts to capture spontaneity without improvisation. London Spitz. 15 July. 9pm. £9. 0171 0171 392 9032

Transient v Resident Idiosyncratic electronic Improv. Sheffield Simunye Inter Cultural Arts. 10 July. 8pm. info e-mail *archer@mcmail.com*

Tricky The burnt-out Bristolian returns from New York exile. London Astoria, 21 July. £12.50. 0171 434 0403

Club spaces

1977 Funk, electro, HipHop, punk and reggae served up late 70s style in a disused tube station and hosted by the Soul Jazz and Satellite labels. London Aldwych Underground. 16 July. 9pm–3am, info 0171 734 3341

Bullitt Future HipHop and sci-fi jazz with guests Cleveland Watkiss and Charlie Dark (6 July), Andy Smith (Portishead) and Sahin Dellemann (13), DJ Vadim (20), and Andy Smith (27). London Dogstar. Tuesdays. free. info 0181 737 1016

Conspirators In Dub Bassline insurgency. Old School classics and New School dub from Subculture, Nation's Vibration and Dubmission DJs. London Islington Bar, Thursdays. 9pm–2am. free. 0181 578 9758

ETC (Extra-Terrestrial Cinema) An evening of live art and space-related cinema featuring live electronica from Phil Durrant's Ticklish and Inventory. London Strike Projects. 19 June, 8pm–late. £4/£3. 0181 858 5983

PHOTO OF IVOR CUTLER: DEAN BELCHER

Freekin' The Frame by Super_Collider play live plus DJ sets from Si Begg Kirk Degiorgio, Mat Consume video director Chris Cunningham and others London The End 31 July info 0171 419 9199

Funkt Hedonistic blend of Electro House and Techno from Lol Hammond Massimo and Shut Up & Dance London Mass 17 July 9 30pm-5am £10-£6, 0171 403 2264

The Hip Trip Phuture Lounge sounds from DJ Mingo-go and guests Glasgow Alaska, Sundays 11pm-3am £3/£2

Kentra Mixture of film and cutting edge electronica featuring Andrea Parker, DJ Harvey and Mao s orchestral drum n bass London Scala 8 July £9/£8 0171 833 2022

Kosmische Post-rock soundscapes from Jerry Can, Horton Jupiter and Jim Backhouse London Upstairs at the Garage 17 July, 9 30pm-3am £5/£4 0171 607 1818

Little Stabs Of Happiness A monthly night of weird cinema and complementary sounds hosted by Pulp s Mark Webber This month films by Harry Smith Ed Sommer and Bruce Conner plus er Steven Spielberg s *Jaws* London ICA 24 July 8pm-1am £8/£6 0171 930 3647

Movement Hardcore drum 'n bass from Ray Keith and Bryan Gee London Bar Rumba Thursdays 9pm-3am, £6-£3 0171 377 9494

Nu Phunk Downtempo Electronica and chilled breakbeat from Pete W with visual contributions from local artists London Vibe Bar Wednesdays 7pm-midnight, free. 0171 247 3479

NY Sushi Future beat science featuring guest slots from Rob Playford (9 July) BOB State (16) Peshay (23) Sheffield Unit, Fridays, £5/£4, 0114 267 1869 In addition the NY Sushi crew present a special night of drum 'n bass Bigger Bang with Fabio Grooverider and Mickey Finn Sheffield Ski Village, 31 July, call the above number for info on time and price

Perverted Science More turntable experimentation with The Scratch Perverts and guests London 333 Club, 16 July, 10pm-5am, £10-£6 0171 739 5949

Raya Film and musical eclectica featuring Headspace Recordings and Flame London ICA, 2 July 8pm-1am £5/£4 0171 930 3647

666 at 333 Sheffield's NY Sushi crew present breakbeat from Fabio Groovender and Jacques Lu Contes London 333 Club 2 July 10pm 5am £10 0171 739 5949

Slack Sabbath A weird take on the day of rest with DJs Pilote and MDK and a live set from Chris TT (11 July), and DJ Downfall and Disastronaut (25) Brighton Lift fortnightly Sundays 7-11pm 01273 325793

Sonic Mook Experiment Breakbeats and electronica with Cut La Roc and Disastronaut (3 July) Mimi Freestyle and DJ Touche (10) Meat Katie and James Lavelle (24) London Scala Saturdays 10pm-6am, £10/£8, 0171 833 2022

Spellbound Live drum 'n bass and freestyle jazz plus DJs Inki and Shadraq Manchester Band on the Wall 30 July, 9 30pm £6 0161 834 1786

The Sprawl Weekly beat science laboratory This month s visiting technicians include Fat Cat Records (1 July) Si-{cut}-db (8) Cologne's Italic Records (15) Twisted Science/Lo Recordings (22) London Global Cafe Thursdays 7 30pm-midnight £3/£2 0181 568 3145

Subvision Eclectic sounds from John Barry to the Aphex Twin London The Zed Bar fortnightly Sundays 8pm-1am £3 0171 631 0362

Urban Torque Big name blend of Techno and breakbeat with Dave Angel and Phil Perry (2 July) grandaddy Juan Atkins and an open decks event for unknown DJs (9) Rennie Pilgrim Pure Science and Ian O Brien (16) and Colin Dale and Chad Jackson (23) London Heaven Fridays 10 30pm-6am £10 £5 0171 930 2020

Vector HipHop/dub soundclash with Nicki B Tommy RO Dan C and Daniel Son (4 July) and a first birthday bash with Andrew Weatherall (1 August) Leeds Milo 3-11pm free

Voodoo Techno drum n bass and electronica with guests including Billy Nasty (2 July) Killabite s Ben Simms (16) and Optical (23) Liverpool Le Bateau Fridays 10pm-4am £8/£7 0151 728 9200

PHOTO OF ANDREW WEATHERALL: TIM KENT

Out There items for inclusion in the August issue should reach us by ***Friday 9 July***

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1 97-99 FM

John Peel *Tues/Wed/Thursdays 8 40-10 30pm* The best place to keep up with new rock indie Techno Jungle Electronica dub and the legendary sessions

Gilles Peterson *Wednesdays midnight-2am* Up- and downtempo beats experimental drum n bass funk psychedelic soul and plenty more in between

Andy Kershaw *Thursdays midnight-2am* Raw musics and global sounds including folk roots reggae out rock and more

Fabio & Grooverider *Fridays 2-4am* Two hours of vanguard drum n bass

Westwood Rap Show *Fridays 11pm-2am/Saturdays 9pm-midnight* Tim s fast breaking HipHop tips

Annie Nightingale *Sundays 4-6 30am* Chilled eclectic sounds for apres clubbers early risers and or insomniacs

BBC Radio 3 90-93 FM

Jazz Century: 1999-Millennium *Saturdays 6pm* Weekly survey of jazz history This month s episodes *Ellington s Maturity* (3 July) *Beginnings Of Bop* (10) *The Traditional Jazz Revival* (17) *Vocalists Take Over* (24)

Mixing It *Saturdays 10 45-11 30pm* Eclectic mix of new music and discourse from Robert Sandall and Mark Russell

Jazz On 3 *Saturdays 11 30pm-1am* Modern jazz recorded in concert This month s highlights include Stan Tracey Trio (3 July) Joe Lovano (10) Bill Bruford s Earthworks (24)

Regional

BBC Derby 94.2/95.3/104.5 FM, 1116 MW

Soundscapes *Sundays 3-6pm* Ashley Franklin plays instrumental electronica contemporary classical/systems music New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR) 94.9 FM

Destination In *Wednesdays 8-10 30pm* Ross Allen spins a motley morphing selection of new music from spacey jazz and minimalism to electronica and leftfield pop

Jah Wobble *Thursdays 8-9pm* Varied assortment of low-end and global sounds from the former PiL bassist

Charlie Gillett *Saturdays 7-9pm* Rock roots dub World Music, blues, R&B and more sounds of the city

BBC Lancashire 95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

On The Wire *Saturdays* Steve Barker s freeform mix of dub experimental electronics [illegible] and more

BBC Merseyside 95.8 FM, 1485 MW

The Late World Noise *Sundays midnight-2am* Out rock, psychedelia Jungle, avant dance warped Ambient [illegible] bal gems in themed sequences

BBC Scotland 92.4-94.7 FM

From Bebop To HipHop *Wednesdays 8-9pm* David Sillars drops jazz and new beats

Beat Patrol *Sundays 8 9pm* Peter Aston plays independent music across the spectrum

Electronica *Sundays 9-10pm* Marc Percival airs the latest Techno and dance tracks

Cable Radio 89.8 FM (Milton Keynes)

The Garden Of Earthly Delights *Fridays 10pm-midnight* Shane Quentin s blend of avant [illegible] electronic exotica with bizarre soundbites

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Dreem Teem *Sundays 6-8pm* Two-step breakbeats from the London duo

Paul Thomas *Sundays 3-5am* Experimental electronica mix

Patrick Forge *Sundays 10pm-midnight* Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

Frost and Hype *Sunday/Monday midnight-2am* More breakbeat that s chilly the most

4 Hero *Mondays 2-4am* Jazz Jungle, cyber-soul breakbeats electrified grooves from the Reinforced duo and guests

Colin Dale *Wednesdays 2-4am* Minimal Techno and concrete House

Surf 107 FM (Brighton)

Totally Wired *Daily 11pm-1am* Eclectic selection of leftfield independent/dance tunes laces with 60s/70s flashbacks

The Chill Factor *Sundays 5-7am* Clive Craske s continuous mix of drum n bass dub psych HipHop, classical Improv and electronica

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ARTISTS OF THE MONTH

This month we feature the wunderkind of Detroit techno **CARL CRAIG** *His new Innerzone Orchestra album shows the progress he has made from such rude beginnings as Psyche on Transmat to the founding of his Planet E imprint thru the major label treadmill with the brave 'Landcruising' LP and out the other side on the triumphant 'More Songs '*

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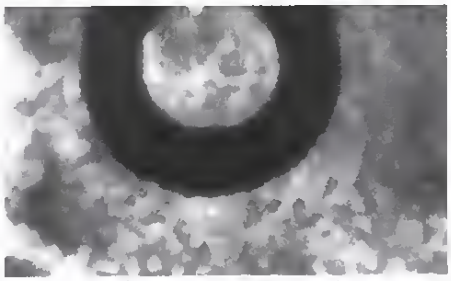

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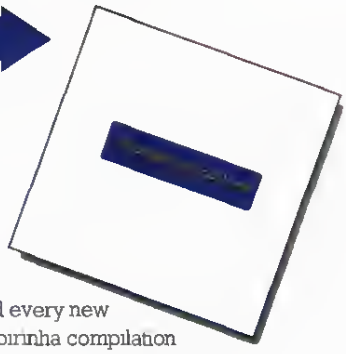

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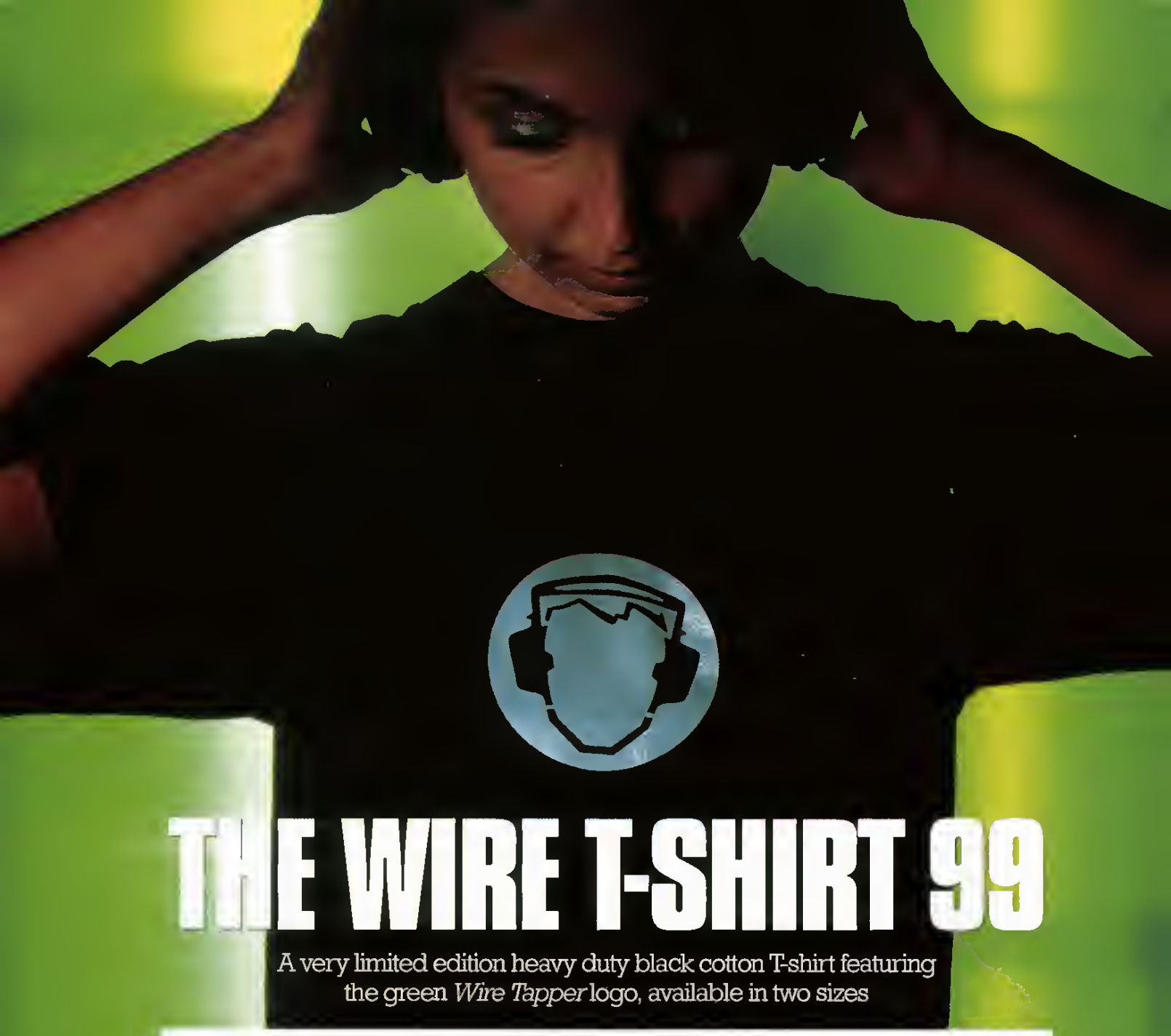

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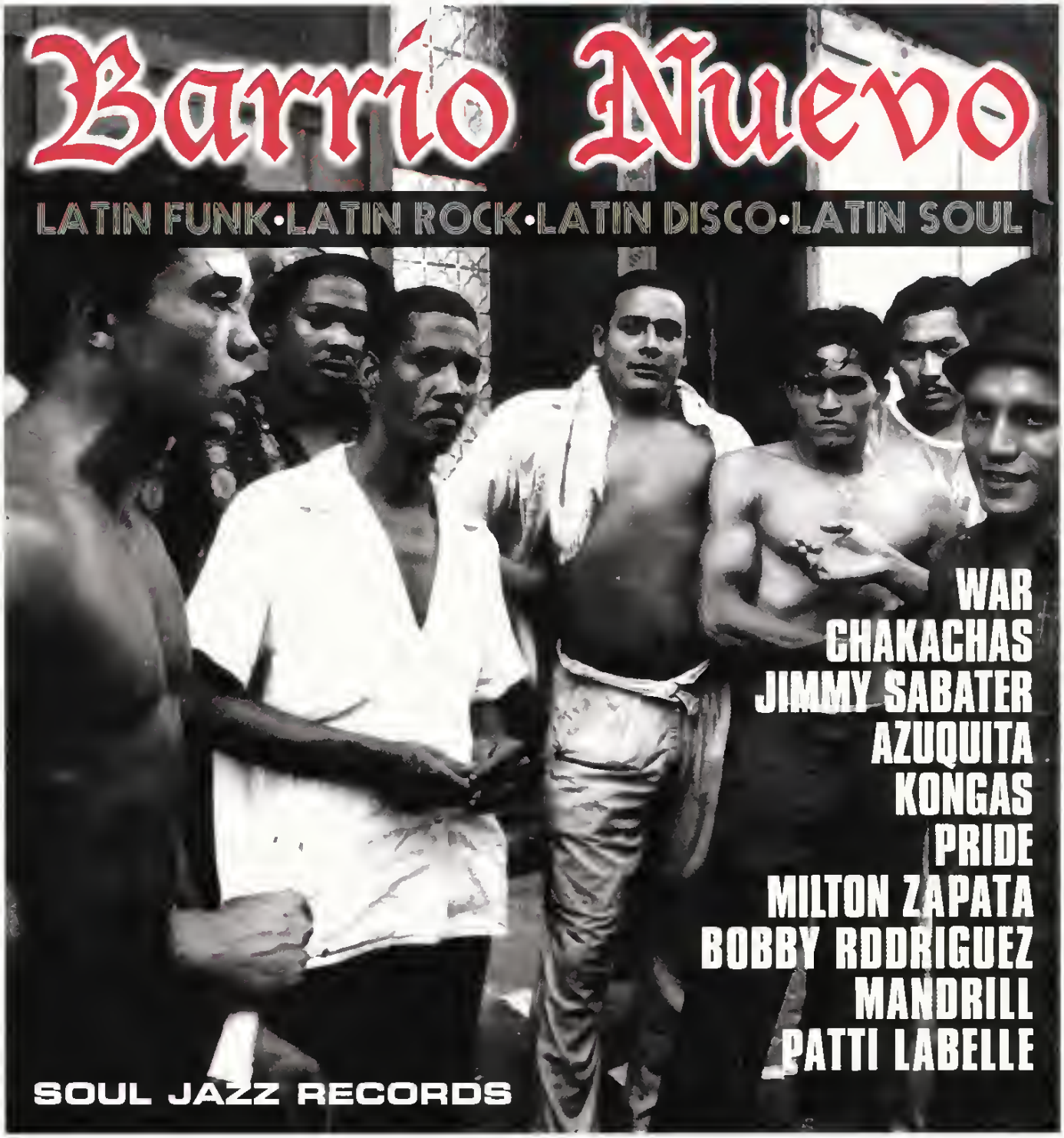

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